natural theology

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
JUN 6 1963
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BL 182 .D66 1962
Donceel, J. F. 1906-
Natural theology

NATURAL THEOLOGY

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
JUN 6 1953
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

NATURAL THEOLOGY

J. F. DONCEEL, S.J.
Fordham University

SHEED AND WARD - NEW YORK

© Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1962

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 62–9106

NIHIL OBSTAT:
JOHN R. READY
CENSOR LIBRORUM
MAY 16, 1962

IMPRIMATUR:
✠ ROBERT F. JOYCE
BISHOP OF BURLINGTON
MAY 17, 1962

Manufactured in the United States of America

Contents

PREFACE vii

INTRODUCTION 3

PART I: THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1 THE TRADITIONAL DEMONSTRATION OF GOD'S EXISTENCE 15

I God's existence cannot be demonstrated *a priori* or *a simultaneo* 15

II God's existence is demonstrated *a posteriori* 24

The First Way of St. Thomas 25

The Other Four Ways 40

2 THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSALITY 48

Outline of a Vindication of the Principle 57

The Same Vindication Further Explained 59

Some Objections against the Vindication 72

Additional Remarks 83

3 RETURN TO THE TRADITIONAL PROOFS 93
The First Way 93
Objections against the Argument from Contingency 95
A Few Other Demonstrations of God's Existence 99
Argument from Moral Obligation 99
Argument from Man's Striving towards Happiness 102
Can Science Demonstrate God's Existence? 106
Answering a Few More Objections 110

PART II: THE ESSENCE OF GOD

4 GOD IN HIMSELF 125
How We Know God 125
God's Unity 131
God's Intelligence 135
God's Will 137
God as a Person 139

5 GOD AND THE WORLD 141
Creation 141
Providence 145
The Problem of Evil 149
Our Personal Relation to God 162

CONCLUSION 165

INDEX 173

Preface

which the student is urged to read, lest he be too much disappointed by this textbook.

St. Paul, speaking of the heathens, wrote to the Romans nineteen centuries ago: "The knowledge of God is clear to their minds; God himself has made it clear to them; from the foundations of the world men have caught sight of his invisible nature, his eternal power and his divineness, as they are known through his creatures. Thus there is no excuse for them; although they had the knowledge of God, they did not honour him or give thanks to him as God . . ." (Rom. 1:19–21, Knox). Relying mainly on this text from Holy Scriptures, the Catholic Church "holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certitude from created things by the natural light of human reason."[1]

The Vatican Council does not explicitly say that the existence of God can be *demonstrated* by reason, it says only that God can be *known* with certitude by reason from created

[1] Vatican Council, sess. iii, On the Catholic Faith, ch. 2; on Revelation, Denz. 1785.

things. However, to say that a reality can be known with certitude from the consideration of other realities is tantamount to saying that the existence of the former can be demonstrated from the latter. Therefore the Council asserts implicitly or virtually that God's existence can be demonstrated by human reason.[2]

But the Council tells us nothing about the manner in which the demonstration is to be conducted. And when we read the writings of Catholic philosophers, we are dismayed to observe that although they all agree that a rational demonstration of God's existence is possible, and most of them agree further that the "five ways" of St. Thomas constitute excellent illustrations of how this demonstration should be conducted, the views they hold as to the manner in which the many modern objections against these traditional proofs should be answered are various and even to some extent conflicting.

For objections against any attempt to demonstrate God's existence from reason have been plentiful, and they continue to multiply under the pens of contemporary authors.

What the student meets, when surveying the field of Natural Theology, is this: many attacks on the traditional proofs of God's existence; considerable agreement among traditional philosophers that St. Thomas's arguments (if not all, at least some of them) can be bolstered against these attacks. But when anybody presents his views about the manner in which he thinks the "five ways" can be refurbished, he is set upon by various colleagues who claim that the approach he suggests is all wrong and that their own is the only reasonable method.

The present generation of young people prizes sincerity. That is why I can think of no better way of introducing this textbook than by telling them in all sincerity what follows:

[2] L. Billot, S.J., *De Deo Uno et Trino* (7th ed., 1926), p. 16.

Here is the way I would try to demonstrate God's existence from reason. My proof will be attacked by many modern philosophers. I shall present as many of their objections as possible and shall try to answer them. I am certain that my answer will not convince the objectors. Philosophical objectors rarely become convinced! So that is all right. But I am not even sure that my answer will satisfy you. Maybe you can find a better one. Even should it satisfy you, I want to warn you that it may not satisfy some other philosophers who hold, as I do, that the objections can be answered, but who go about it in a different way, which I do not find satisfactory.

This is a strange state of affairs. Here is a basic conviction, shared by uncounted millions in all countries and centuries. It is a conviction than which none is theoretically and practically more important. It lies at the base of the religious faith of most of mankind. To claim, as some do, that it is no part of the foundation of religious faith, but that it is guaranteed by that faith, and only by that faith, seems to imply a vicious circle. For faith consists in believing the word of God. But how can we reasonably believe the word of somebody whose existence is unknown to us? I say *reasonably* believe. For to believe somebody who is unknown to us is not faith but credulity. We want our faith to be a reasonable homage to God. We are convinced that God exists, and we hold that it is reasonable for us to entertain that conviction.[3] But when we try to justify it rationally and to make explicit the reasoning on which we implicitly rely, all of us, laymen and phi-

[3] This does not mean that every believer should start by demonstrating rationally to himself the existence of God before accepting the Divine Revelation. It does not mean that every human being should be capable of doing so. It means only that, given the required dispositions, interest, education and talent, the human mind should be able to achieve such a demonstration.

losophers alike, experience great difficulties. The more the reasoning is spun out, the less conviction it seems to carry!

Should we be surprised at this? Trying to demonstrate the existence of God is like trying to demonstrate the existence of water to a fish, of the air to a bird; the reality of daylight in some world without nights and without shadows. It would be surprising if any investigation having to do with the all-encompassing reality should differ only in degree of difficulty from other problems.

All the foregoing refers to the proof of God's existence. When we investigate the Divine Essence we meet other difficulties. To investigate the Infinite with a finite intelligence, to put the Ineffable into abstract human concepts, strikes one almost as a desecration. Where man should fall prostrate and adore, he is trying to see and to understand! He might as well examine the sun with unprotected eyes—he would see precious little, and that little only at the cost of intense pain. So it is with one who tries to investigate the Divine Essence with his unaided human reason: much laboring effort, precious little light. Not because there is nothing to see but because there is too much to see, because man is blinded by the sun of the intellectual world. He is not even as well off as the ordinary sungazer. For the latter, although he does not see much, is nevertheless conscious of the tremendous impact of that star he is trying to look at; whereas our poor concepts about God are not only devoid of light, but also of warmth and feeling. Yet God himself has given us our human intellect, and he wants us to use it, even when approaching him. "*Intellectum valde ama,*" wrote St. Augustine to Consensius[4]—"Have a

[4] *Patrol. Latina,* XXXIII, 459.

great love for your intellect"—and his admonition has been handed on by countless generations of Christian thinkers. The definition by which the Vatican Council upheld the intellect's capability of demonstrating God's existence is one of the most remarkable instances of this traditional Christian attitude.

Therefore, although we suspect that our human intellect will not be quite equal to this, its most difficult task, we shall nevertheless try, as far as lies in our power, to investigate reverently but boldly the Divine Essence and God's relation to his creatures. Even if the outcome of our efforts consists only in a clearer awareness that we know hardly anything at all about God from reason alone, that awareness itself may result in a greater respect for the Wholly Other.

This textbook of Natural Theology is rather short, because most college courses can devote hardly more than one trimester to the study of this topic. Unavoidably some problems had to be ruled out, others could be presented only briefly. It contains no historical study of the questions of Natural Theology; not because such a study is not important, but because it could not have been carried out seriously without making this book into a bulky volume. The philosophy on which this textbook is based is that of St. Thomas Aquinas, as interpreted by Maréchal[5] and his school. I have adopted Maréchal's in-

[5] Joseph Maréchal, S.J. (1878–1944), taught philosophy at the Jesuit house of studies (not at the university) of Louvain, Belgium. His great merit is to have re-emphasized the Platonic and Augustinian elements in the Thomistic synthesis. His main work is *Le Point de départ de la Métaphysique* (five volumes published of the six planned). For further biographical and bibliographical details, see *Mélanges Joseph Maréchal,* I, pp. 3–21; 47–53.

terpretation because it enables me to answer many serious objections, and also, and more importantly, because it keeps Thomism wide open for continued growth under the stimulation of modern and contemporary thinking. Since the spirit of Aquinas is more important than the letter, quotations from his works have been kept to a minimum.

This textbook will be usefully supplemented by the attentive reading of one of the more traditional textbooks of Natural Theology,[6] which devotes more space to the classical problems of that branch of philosophy. By condensing, or omitting altogether, the treatment of some secondary problems, it was possible to devote more space in the present book

[6] I recommend especially Henri Renard, S.J., *Philosophy of God* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1951); Gerard Smith, S.J., *Natural Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1951); Maurice R. Holloway, S.J., *An Introduction to Natural Theology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959).

For further reading and study, the following are recommended, besides the essential books mentioned on p. 49.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I, q. 2–26, 44, 45, 103, 104; *Summa contra Gentiles,* III, chs. 64–113; James Collins, *God in Modern Philosophy* (Chicago: Regnery, 1959); Joseph De Finance, S.J., *Existence et Liberté* (Paris: Vitte, 1955); Jean Delanglade, S.J., *Le Problème de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier, 1959); Henri de Lubac, S.J., *The Discovery of God* (New York: Kenedy, 1960); Pierre Fontan, *Adhésion et Dépassement* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1952); Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941); D. J. B. Hawkins, *The Essentials of Theism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950); Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God* (New York: Harper, 1954); E. L. Mascall, *Existence and Analogy* (London: Longmans, 1949); Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Dieu caché* (Louvain: Louvain University, 1961); Gustave Weigel, S.J., and Arthur G. Madden, *Religion and the Knowledge of God* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961).

to vindicating the principle of causality, the very backbone of every Natural Theology, which, in view of the fierce attacks it has undergone during the last three centuries, continues to be taken too much for granted by many authors.

NATURAL THEOLOGY

Introduction

Natural theology is the science of God, which, by unaided human reason, demonstrates his existence and studies his essence and his relation to the universe.

The expression "by unaided human reason" distinguishes natural theology from *revealed* or *sacred theology,* whose object also is God, but investigated in the light of revelation and of supernatural faith.

Our definition serves to indicate the three parts into which natural theology has been traditionally subdivided. The first part demonstrates the existence of God, shows *that* he is. The second part studies the essence of God, investigates *what* he is. The third part tries to shed some light upon the relations which exist between creatures and God and takes up such problems as creation, providence and the existence of evil.

Natural theology is called a "science." It is not necessary to add that it is a philosophical science, not a natural science, since God cannot be known by the senses. It follows that natural theology is a part of philosophy—more specifically, of metaphysics. Metaphysics studies being as being. The part of it which studies being in general is called general metaphysics,

or ontology. Other parts study particular beings: thus inorganic beings as beings are studied in cosmology, organic beings in psychology, the infinite being in natural theology.[1]

This confronts us at once with a difficulty. When we say that natural theology is a part of metaphysics, we seem to imply that its object is a part of the object of metaphysics, that God constitutes one category of being among several others. This, of course, is not true. God is not one being among others, he is Being Itself; nothing can really be compared with him or put on the same level as he.

That explains why it is not really possible to study ontology or general metaphysics without at least implicitly studying the Divine Being. Hence it is not easy to decide which part of philosophy should be studied first, ontology or natural theology. It is impossible to study natural theology unless one is familiar with the great principles of ontology. On the other hand, when we study being in general in ontology, it is impossible not to refer to God. The Infinite Being is the keystone of the ontological structure, and it seems impossible to study that science without considering the origin of all being. This is a real difficulty, and it explains why the study of God and the study of being are not easy for most minds. All the great truths of metaphysics contain each other implicitly; it is not possible to investigate one of them without meeting, or even needing, the others; this "circuminsession" of the meta-

[1] Cosmology and psychology are not only parts of metaphysics, they belong also to natural philosophy, which is that part of philosophy in which the data of sense experience are interpreted in the light of metaphysical principles. Since there are no data of sense experience with regard to being in general and concerning the infinite being, no part of ontology or of natural theology belongs to natural philosophy.

physical verities, as Pierre Scheuer has called it,[2] explains the difficulty of that science. Since it is not possible for the beginner to tackle all problems at once, a certain order must be followed. Traditionally, and for good pedagogical reasons, the study of ontology precedes that of natural theology. But it is good to remember that the knowledge of natural theology will shed light on the problems of ontology, even as ontology is required for the understanding of natural theology.

It may not be useless to insist upon these considerations, for they may give heart to those who find the study of philosophy—or, at least, of ontology and natural theology—very difficult indeed. It would be so much easier if we could investigate *all* problems *simultaneously* and have before our eyes *all* the answers *at once.*

In this respect metaphysics differs considerably from elementary mathematics. Studying metaphysics is like building an arch, while studying mathematics is like building a wall. In building a wall, at least in the old-fashioned manner of the stone masons, you simply put one layer of bricks above the other. You would never dream of skipping a layer here and there, of starting with the top of the wall. So too in ordinary mathematics. One theorem is firmly established, it is based upon the theorems which preceded it, and it never presupposes those that follow. The procedure is orderly, methodical, most acceptable to the average human mind. Not so when you build an arch. You cannot simply start with the lower layers of bricks and gradually build the higher ones above them. Your structure will collapse. That fourth or fifth brick which

[2] Pierre Scheuer, S.J., "Notes on Metaphysics," *Cross Currents,* 7 (1957), p. 20. Reprints of this important article are available from *Cross Currents,* 3111 Broadway, New York 27, N. Y.

you are trying to put in its place not only requires the lower one as a foundation, it also demands the next higher one to hold it firm. The ideal way of building your arch would be to put down all your bricks in one stroke. Since that is impossible, you will need a frame or scaffolding to put your building materials on. Once that frame is there, you can start to build any place, since no part of the structure will be solid and secure until the last brick is in. That is the way the mind proceeds in metaphysics. If we could grasp all its truths and implications in a single glance, the whole of that supreme science would seem simple and self-evident to us. Since that is not possible, at least for a beginner, we may start pretty much anywhere, and we shall need to make continual reference to other parts that have already been demonstrated (which is all right) but also to parts that have not yet been demonstrated (which is rather disconcerting). *Metaphysics is so frightfully difficult because it is so utterly simple.*

This is one of the reasons for a strange state of affairs. Many people are firmly convinced that God exists and that they could, if challenged, offer a very solid demonstration in support of that conviction—until they are invited to produce such a demonstration and answer a few objections! Then they may get the impression that their proof, which they thought was so solid, looks and feels flimsy and that their answers to objections are weak and seem not infrequently to beg the question. Now the reason for this feeling of frustration might be that the proof is in fact weak and unsatisfactory, incapable of sustaining critical examination. That is what many modern philosophers believe and try to establish.

They forget, however, that there is another possible explanation, one which I believe is the right one. Because of the

"circuminsession" of all great metaphysical truths, a profound metaphysical demonstration such as, from its very nature, the proof of God's existence necessarily is can be experienced in all its overwhelming evidence only when all its elements are somehow "seen" together and all at once. This happens in the pre-reflective, existential stage, in which we do indeed have a clear impression that our conviction is critically justifiable. But when we start to examine our proof, we must analyze, conceptualize; we must separate elements whose strength consists precisely in their integration; thus we rob the proof of its solidity in and through the very attempt to validate it.[3] Anyone who starts very logically from below would not find it difficult to demonstrate that the bricks in an arch cannot possibly hold, since they are supported by other bricks which they themselves are supposed to support. Yet the arch is quite solid as long as you do not take the bricks apart.

This might sound like a dodge. It will, at least, seem so to positivistic and analytical minds if they do not counterbalance their overcritical approach by a deep awareness of the mixture of enormous complexity and utter simplicity which characterizes all reality.

Does this mean, then, that we refuse to analyze our proof and to submit our arguments to critical examination? By no means. But let nobody be surprised if, in the very process of analysis, we return continually to our synthesis; if we do so especially every time we feel cornered by a strong objection. The proof of God's existence, as we shall have ample oppor-

[3] This seems to be one of the reasons why women generally have fewer intellectual difficulties with regard to God's existence than men. It is not because they are less intelligent or more intelligent than men, but because, in their thinking, they are more inclined to the synthetic than to the analytic approach.

tunity of repeating, is based upon some kind of fundamental intuition. That intuition must be translated into concepts if we are to discuss and defend it at all. But these concepts derive their real content and value only from the intuition, and we shall time and again have to revert to it throughout our discussion.

The first result of a course in natural theology may be to weaken the strength of your reasons for admitting the existence of God. But this should be only a transitory effect. Returning to the natural, no longer pre-reflective but henceforward post-reflective, attitude, you will, I hope, recover an impression of solidity which is in fact stronger, because the spontaneous coherence of the proof is profiting now—and only now—from your analytic and critical examination of its sundry elements.

Something similar occurs in great esthetic experiences. When you hear a symphony for the first time, you may get an overwhelming but confused sense of beauty. If you start to analyze the symphony in order to discover the secret of its beauty, you will probably lose much of your first enjoyment. But it will come back enriched and deepened when, foregoing the analytic approach, you let yourself once more be carried away. Your pleasure, which had been temporarily dulled by the analysis, is enhanced by it once you stop analyzing.

We shall meet a striking example of this difficulty further on in this book. It will soon be evident that the demonstration of God's existence is based upon the principle of metaphysical causality. Now if we try, I do not say to demonstrate that principle (a demonstration in the strict sense is impossible), but to vindicate it, to justify it, to show to ourselves and to others that, and why, we are right when we accept and use

it, we shall note that this cannot be done unless we connect it with the supreme reality of God.

In other words, it is impossible to demonstrate God's existence unless we have first justified the principle of causality. And it is impossible to justify the use of the principle of causality without at the same time demonstrating the existence of God. The two stand or fall together. But we cannot say everything at once. We must begin with one of the two points. Our procedure will necessarily be artificial.

Practically we shall first give a demonstration of God's existence borrowed from St. Thomas. It will be at once evident that this demonstration hinges on the principle of causality. We shall then try to justify our use of that principle, and in doing so we shall again demonstrate the existence of God. Finally, we shall come back to the first demonstration, which will now be shown to have a real validity. This is indeed a rather cumbersome procedure. Remember, we are building an arch, and we are allowed to use a frame. The structure is supposed to hold only when the last stone is in and the frame is removed. Or, to change the metaphor: we cannot learn how to swim unless we jump into the water; but we should not jump into the water unless we can swim. That is why our first efforts at swimming are far from elegant. Yet somehow most people manage to learn. Likewise the demonstration of God's existence may at first strike you as artificial and shaky. Try to "live" it in your spiritual faculties, in your intellect and will—or rather, more profoundly still, there where, as yet undivided, these two faculties emerge from the very substance of your soul—and that first impression may slowly disappear.

Part I

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Before attempting to demonstrate God's existence, we must agree on what we mean by God—that is, we must propose a nominal definition of him. A nominal definition is one which explains what a word means; it does not imply that the reality meant by that word actually exists. A real definition explains what a given reality is. We shall be able to give a real definition of God only after having demonstrated his existence and explored his essence.

Everybody will agree that by the word GOD we mean the supreme being, who made everything that exists and who was not himself made. That much seems to be implied by the popular idea of God. We shall try to demonstrate that such a being exists. We shall even try to demonstrate more than that. The God whom we have defined might be a finite God; he might have made the world from some pre-existing stuff; he might be immanent to the world, as the pantheists claim. Let us, then, specify that what we mean by God is a personal being of infinite perfection, who has created everything from nothing, and who is distinct from the universe he has created.

In other words, the God we are trying to demonstrate is a personal, infinite, transcendent being.

We shall first try to show that the existence of such a being can be demonstrated neither *a priori* nor *a simultaneo,* that it must be demonstrated *a posteriori.* We shall then study in detail the first of St. Thomas's famous demonstrations and briefly consider the four others. This will make it quite evident that these demonstrations hinge on the principle of metaphysical causality, which we shall then try to vindicate.

Finally we shall turn our attention to a few other ways in which the demonstration of God's existence has been attempted and answer a few objections against all demonstrations of God's existence.

1

The Traditional Demonstration of God's Existence

I. *God's existence cannot be demonstrated* a priori *or* a simultaneo.

We remember from our study of ontology the difference between existence and essence. Existence is that which makes a being exist, which makes it real, which causes it *to be*. Essence, on the other hand, is that which makes a being that which it is. When we know the essence of a being, we know *what* it is, if it is. When we know the existence of a being, we know *that it is*. We arrive at the essence of a being in our concept of it, whereas the existence of a being can be determined only through a judgment.

The idea of a being is composed of its intelligible notes or attributes; but the existence of that being is not such a note or attribute, it is that which makes all the notes and attributes real. We can get to know the essence of one thing by studying the essence of another. Thus his knowledge of a circle and of its radius enables the geometrician to understand the nature

or essence of a hexagon, a figure inscribed in the circle, having six sides, each of the same length as the radius. But we cannot pass directly from the essence of a thing to its existence. Knowing *what* something is does not tell us *that* it is.

All this amounts to saying that from the ideal order (which is the order of our concepts, of essences and of mere possibles), we cannot rightfully arrive at conclusions concerning the real order, which is the order of existence, of existent beings, of actual reality. It follows also that by mere syllogistic reasoning we cannot reach a conclusion with regard to existence; for that kind of reasoning passes from the premises to the conclusion via the middle term—that is, via a concept which, as such, does not include real existence. Does this mean that syllogistic reasoning is restricted exclusively to the ideal order? By no means. If its premises refer to reality, its conclusion, too, will apply to the real order. But if its premises are true only in the ideal order, we shall never, through the syllogism alone, reach the order of existence.

Hence it is evident that neither concepts as such nor syllogistic reasoning as such can lead us to certitude about the real existence of some being. How, then, can we reach a conclusion with regard to real existence? Only by starting from experience—that is, from some kind of direct, intuitive knowledge derived either from sense experience or from an intellectual intuition. From such experience we can reach certitude of the existence of some reality either directly, as when we see or hear a plane flying overhead, or indirectly, as when fresh tracks tell us of the recent passage of a deer.

It follows that we shall be able to demonstrate God's existence only if we start from some experience. Reasoning will be required, since we have no direct experience of God, but

the starting point must undeniably be found in some experience.

From what we have said it will be clear to what extent we both agree and disagree with the Logical Positivists and with the many Analysts who have taken over from them the Principle of Verifiability. According to this principle a statement has a meaning if, and only if, it can be verified. We assent to the principle if the required verification may be made either through sense experience or through intellectual experience. We reject it if only sense experience is accepted. Unfortunately Logical Positivists deny the possibility of intellectual experience, and the first task of anyone who enters into discussion with them is to vindicate the rights of that kind of experience; for instance, by showing that the Principle of Verifiability cannot itself be verified by sense experience and is, therefore, in terms of Logical Positivism, self-refuting. Our demonstration of God's existence starts from that intellectual experience which is present, somewhat as its very soul, in every sense experience. Whenever I know a material object (sense experience) I am also at once *aware that I know* that material object (intellectual experience). The intellectual experience on which we shall base our demonstration is the experience of our own intellectual activity.

What we have said about the way of demonstrating God's existence can also be expressed as follows: God's existence cannot be demonstrated *a priori* or *a simultaneo;* it must be demonstrated *a posteriori*. A demonstration is *a priori* when its middle term is prior *in nature* to the predicate of its conclusion. An *a priori* demonstration proceeds generally from cause to effect. A demonstration is *a posteriori* when its middle term depends or follows *in nature* from the predicate of the

conclusion. It proceeds generally from effect to cause. A demonstration is *a simultaneo,* when its middle term is neither prior nor posterior to the predicate of the conclusion, when the two are given *simultaneously*. It proceeds by a mere analysis of concepts, without any appeal to experience.

It is quite evident that an *a priori* demonstration of the existence of God is excluded, since nothing is prior in nature to God, because God cannot have a cause.

The foregoing has also demonstrated that an *a simultaneo* demonstration cannot lead us to a conclusion concerning the existence of God. It will, however, help us see the flaws in some ingenious but invalid demonstrations of God's existence.

The most famous of these attempts is that of St. Anselm:

> We believe that you are something than which nothing greater can be conceived. . . . And certainly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist only in the intellect. For if it exists only in the intellect, it can also be conceived to exist in reality, which is greater. . . . Hence there undoubtedly exists something than which nothing greater can be conceived, and in the intellect, and in reality.[1]

We may present St. Anselm's argument as follows in syllogistic form:

> The greatest conceivable being exists in reality.
> But God is the greatest conceivable being.
> Therefore God exists in reality.

Nobody will deny the minor premise of this syllogism. As for the major, St. Anselm tried to demonstrate it thus: If the

[1] St. Anselm, *Proslogion,* ch. II.

greatest conceivable being does not exist in reality, it is not the greatest conceivable being. For then a being can be conceived which is like the one we are speaking of, but which also possesses real existence. And this would be the greatest conceivable being.

To which we may reply, in syllogistic form again, as follows:

> The greatest conceivable being exists in reality. —We must distinguish:
> *It must be conceived as existing in reality.* —True
> *It actually exists in reality.* —We must distinguish again: and this can be demonstrated by a mere examination of its concept. —False
> *and this can be demonstrated from experience.* —True

And to St. Anselm's demonstration of the major premise, we make the following rejoinder: It is true that if the greatest conceivable being is conceived as not existing in reality, it is not the greatest conceivable being. Hence it is quite true that the greatest conceivable being must be *conceived* as existing in reality. But from this it does not follow that it does actually exist in reality.

This ontological argument of St. Anselm has given rise to endless discussions in philosophical literature. Most philosophers now admit that it does not prove what it is intended to prove, because it remains entirely within the ideal order, or within the realm of essences. It cannot be our purpose here to decide what St. Anselm really meant by this argument. Taken at its face value, it is obviously invalid, for the reasons explained above.

Yet, in order to prepare the student for what we shall try to explain later, we will point out a few important aspects of this question. The argument would be valid if St. Anselm had demonstrated that the greatest conceivable being exists in reality. This remark may sound rather silly, since it amounts to saying that St. Anselm would really have demonstrated God's existence if he had demonstrated that God (the greatest conceivable being) exists in reality. Yet there is more to it than this.

Whenever we think of a being, we can think of a greater being; in fact, we do so spontaneously, at least in this sense: that whenever we think of a being, we realize at once that this being is finite, limited. But—and this is a remark of the utmost importance—*in order to know a limit as limit, we must, in fact or in our striving, be beyond that limit.* Since we do know everything as limited, our intellect is, in fact or in its striving, beyond any limit. Our intellect is essentially in the process of "transcending," is thus "already beyond," anything it ever knows. Does this not imply that our intellect is continually striving, and striving towards some reality which is beyond any limit—that is, towards the Unlimited, the Infinite; the one "than which nothing greater can be conceived"?

St. Anselm may or may not have been vaguely aware of these implications of his argument. He did not explain them clearly, and as it stands his demonstration is invalid. If he had worked out these implications, he might have succeeded in presenting the best possible demonstration of God's existence.

We have pointed this out so that the student may give some thought to this possible approach. To know a limit as limit implies some knowledge of what lies beyond the limit. We know everything we know as limited. We shall try to show that

the principle of causality, on which every demonstration of God's existence hinges, is nothing but the conceptual translation of this "transcending," "prospective" movement of our intellect.

Another way of presenting the ontological argument comes from Leibniz:

> Only God or the necessary being has this privilege, that he must exist if he is possible. And since nothing can prevent the possibility of that which contains no boundaries, no negation and therefore no contradiction, this alone suffices to know God's existence *a priori*.[2]

We can put this into a syllogism:

> If God is possible, he exists.
> But God is possible.
> Therefore God exists.

At our first encounter with such a syllogism we are inclined to grant the minor and to demand a demonstration of the major premise. A closer examination, however, might show that this first reaction is not the right one: it seems wiser to grant the major and to demand a demonstration of the minor. In other words, we might answer, in form, as follows:

> *If God is possible, he exists.* True.
> *But God is possible.* Let us distinguish:
> God is possible, and this is evident from a mere examination of the concept of God. False.

[2] *Monadologie,* #45.

> God is possible, and this is evident when we have demonstrated his existence, or discovered an undeniable fact which implies the possibility of his existence. True.

In other words, Leibniz saw no internal contradiction in the concept of God. It does not follow that there is no such contradiction. We cannot really be sure *a priori* that the concept of an infinitely perfect being is not contradictory. We have no adequate concept of such a being; we know such a reality only through analogous concepts, and the unavoidable haziness which, for our finite minds, envelops such concepts might, for all we know, conceal a hidden contradiction. To claim that we know of God's possibility before we know of his existence or before we discover an undeniable fact which implies the possibility of that existence is an instance of the unwarranted transition from the ideal to the real order.

Leibniz's argument might be used as an argument *ad hominem*. It can be shown that one who admits that God is possible has also admitted that he exists. Thus this argument helps us to a better understanding of the unique nature of this infinite being who is the only one whose essence it is to exist, whose possibility implies his existence.

The student may not understand at once why we admitted the major of Leibniz's syllogism so easily, why we claim that God's possibility implies his existence. He might object that there are many things which are possible and which, nevertheless, do not exist.

We do not claim that whatever is possible exists. As a matter of fact, only of God can it be truly affirmed that if he is possible, he exists. Since this point is so important in our demonstration, we want to make it very clear.

Suppose that God should not exist. Then he will never exist, he cannot exist, it is impossible for him to exist, he is impossible. You notice that the word *impossible* is used here in a special sense. We use it generally in the sense of "not contradictory." This is intrinsic possibility. A being is intrinsically possible when its definition does not contain any contradiction. If a being is intrinsically impossible, if it contains an inner contradiction, the question is settled: that being cannot exist. Square circles and sticks with only one end are forever excluded from existence. However, when we say that God's non-existence would entail his impossibility, we are speaking of another kind of possibility, which is known as extrinsic possibility. A being is extrinsically possible when either it exists or there exists a cause which may put it into existence. Thus all finite beings which are intrinsically possible are also extrinsically possible. For either they exist, or God can cause them to exist. God, on the other hand, is extrinsically possible if, and only if, he exists. For should he not exist, no cause can produce him. Hence we may say that if God does not exist, he is not (extrinsically) possible. And it follows by simple contraposition, that if God is possible, he exists.[3]

It follows that should we discover an undeniable *fact* which implied the possibility of God's existence, we could really say that this undeniable fact also implied that God really existed. Now, we shall try to show that our intellect strives naturally towards the unlimited being. But a natural striving cannot be directed towards the impossible; therefore the unlimited being must be possible, which implies that it exists. It is in that general direction that we shall try to vindicate the value of the

[3] Another demonstration of this point will be given later. See p. 60.

principle of metaphysical causality, on which every demonstration of God's existence is based.

II. *God's existence is demonstrated* a posteriori.

Since God's existence can be demonstrated neither *a priori* nor *a simultaneo,* it must be demonstrated *a posteriori.* From God's effects we must go back to God as their cause. This argument may be summarized as follows: If something exists, God exists; but something does exist, therefore God exists. The major is an application of the principle of causality, the minor is an undeniable fact of experience.

The famous "five ways" of St. Thomas Aquinas all proceed in this way. Their implicit major is always the principle of causality. The minor premises differ, because there are different ways in which it can be shown that things are contingent—not self-explaining but demanding a further explanation, dependent on some cause.

A cause may be a material, a formal, an efficient, an exemplary or a final cause. God cannot be the material or the formal cause of any creature, because these causes are intrinsic to the reality which they cause. God is the efficient cause of all contingent beings. The first three ways of St. Thomas consider God as an efficient cause. The first considers the passing from potency to act in the effect as a sign of God's action; the second way studies the activity of the immediate cause of some effect as it works under the supreme causality of God; the third way considers the term of the divine operation, the created effect itself in its contingency. The

fourth way considers God as the exemplary cause of all created reality. Finally, the fifth way studies God, not exactly as the end, but as the cause which directs the created agents to their respective ends.[4]

Since each of the "five ways" of St. Thomas exemplifies fundamentally the same basic approach to God, we shall study only one of them thoroughly, contenting ourselves with a few remarks about the four others.[5] We shall use the first way of St. Thomas for our purpose. We shall examine it carefully, try to show how it hinges on the principle of causality; next, try to vindicate the value of the principle of causality; finally, after having done so, return to the first way and plug the loopholes which a first inspection may have revealed.

THE FIRST WAY OF ST. THOMAS

The first way is thus exposed by St. Thomas:

> The first and most manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is moved is moved by another, for nothing can be moved except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is moved; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality, . . . Now it is not possible that the same thing should

[4] Cf. A. Grégoire, S.J., *Immanence et Transcendance* (Brussels: L'Edition Universelle, 1939), pp. 134–135.

[5] For a more detailed study of the other ways the student is referred to one of the textbooks of natural theology mentioned in the Preface.

be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. . . . It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e., that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is moved must be moved by another. If that by which it is moved be itself moved, then this also must needs be moved by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover, seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are moved by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is moved by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, moved by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.[6]

We may, in order to facilitate the discussion, put this argument in form as follows. (The numbers at the end of some of the statements will serve for further reference. The unnumbered statements are self-evident and do not need further discussion.)

Whatever is moved is moved by another. (1)
But some things are moved. (2)
Therefore they are moved by another.
But that other either is moved or is not moved.
If it is not moved, it is an unmoved mover.
If it is moved, it is moved by another.
But it is impossible to go on indefinitely from one moved mover to another moved mover. (3)
Therefore we must finally arrive at an unmoved mover.
The unmoved mover is God. (4)

[6] *S. Theol.*, I, 2, 3. The translation of this first way and of the four other ways is taken from A. C. Pegis (ed.), *The Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1944), Vol. I, pp. 22–23.

(1) *Whatever is moved is moved by another.* In ordinary language *movement* means generally the passage of a material body from one part of space to some other. In philosophy the word *movement,* while including local motion, has a much wider meaning. It means any passage from potency to act. It includes the movement of a car, the heating of a room, the healing of a wound, the ripening of a fruit, the growing of a child, the development of a civilization, the acquisition of knowledge or of virtue. Whenever a being acquires a new determination, a perfection which it did not formerly possess, that being is said to be moved. The expression "whatever is moved" is wider, therefore, than such everyday expressions as "whatever is made," "whatever changes," although in a discussion with philosophically untrained people it might perhaps be replaced by one of them.[7]

That statement seems to be very easy to demonstrate. If a being acquires some new determination which it did not previously possess (that is what we mean when we say that "it is moved"), it is obvious that this determination must come from some other being. If the being could give itself that new determination, it would mean that it possessed previously what it did not possess previously, which is obviously a contradiction and therefore an impossibility.

In other words: Whatever is moved is moved either by itself or by another. But it is not moved by itself, for, in that hypothesis, it would be at one and the same time in potency and in act with respect to the same determination. Therefore it is moved by another.

[7] Thus, you might argue as follows: Whatever is made is made by another. But some things are made. Therefore . . . . Maritain uses "whatever changes" instead of "whatever is moved."

There is, however, a serious flaw in this demonstration. The major is not a perfect disjunction. A third possibility must be considered. We must say: Whatever is moved is moved either by itself or by another, or by nothing. The only reason why we exclude the last possibility is that we already hold that "whatever is moved is moved by something"—which is exactly what we must demonstrate.

In other words: in order to demonstrate the statement in question, it must be shown that movement requires an explanation, that it is not self-explaining. St. Thomas and the Schoolmen were so convinced of this that they did not feel it necessary to demonstrate what they considered to be self-evident. And in a sense it is self-evident; we all assume it continually. However, a certain number of modern philosophers have questioned it, and if we are to give a rational demonstration of our convictions, we cannot afford to overlook their difficulties.

What is in question here is the value of the principle of causality. It seems so obvious that we take it for granted, but since it has been variously challenged, we shall have to come back to it in a later part of this work.

Another objection against our statement derives from the definition of life as frequently presented in philosophical psychology. Life is defined as the ability which a being has of moving itself. If a living being can move itself, then whatever is moved is not moved by another.

To this we answer that a living being is never the total cause of its own movement. It differs from lifeless beings in that it does not receive the totality of its movement from outside causes, it is not purely passive. It is a partial cause and explanation of its own activities. But the definition of life

does not mean that a living being is the total cause of its own movement. The fundamental principle may therefore be more exactly expressed as "Whatever is moved is moved at least in part by another."

(2) *Some things are moved.* This, says St. Thomas, is immediately evident from sense experience. Here again, however, the history of philosophy forces us to be more critical. Therefore we shall not use the most obvious example of movement, local movement, since modern physics claims that it has no cause; it is simply explained by inertia, or the curvature of space. We shall compromise by selecting that kind of movement which nobody can deny without contradiction, the movement of affirmation.

Whoever denies the reality of movement affirms that there is no movement. But this very affirmation is an instance of movement. It is the acquisition by the mind of the objector of a new determination, which it did not possess a minute ago; it is a real passage from potency to act.

Of course, most people are quite willing to admit many other kinds of movement—e.g., the growth of a plant or of a child, evolution in the organic or cultural field, progress in virtue, etc. Any one of a variety of such movements can be taken as a starting point. Hypercritical opponents may quibble about some of them, but it is difficult to see how they could, without an implicit contradiction, deny the kind of movement which we are using. No discussion of our problem is possible without that movement.

(3) *It is impossible to go on indefinitely from one moved mover to another moved mover.* Our argument will lead up to God only if it can be shown that an endless series of subordinated causes is impossible, or, at least, that it explains

nothing. We notice that some things are moved on this earth, and we want to explain that movement. We attribute it to a cause. Examining that cause, which is supposed to explain the movement, we note that it is being moved itself; hence it too requires an explanation. Can we not go on indefinitely in this way? Obviously not. For in that case a complete explanation of the movement is never forthcoming.

Yet here we must introduce an important distinction between essentially subordinated causes and accidentally subordinated causes.

Two causes are *essentially subordinated* when the lower can operate only under the *present causal influx* of the higher. Thus a stone is moved by a stick which is moved by my hand. That stick moves the stone only when itself moved by my hand. Its activity supposes the present causal influx of the higher cause.

Two causes are *accidentally subordinated* when the lower cause depends in some way on the higher cause, but not for the very exercise of its causality. The lower cause, in this instance, may derive from the higher one, but while it is exercising its own causality it is no longer dependent on the causal influence of that higher one. Thus in the famous hen-egg series every hen depends for its origin on the egg from which it was hatched, and every egg depends likewise for its origin on the hen which laid it. But in the very laying of the eggs, no hen is actually dependent on any previous egg, and in the production of the next hen no egg depends on a previous hen.

The importance of this distinction becomes evident from a simple consideration. The desk on which I am writing was made by a carpenter and the world in which I live was made

by God. But from the fact that the desk exists I am not allowed to conclude that the carpenter is still alive. He may have died long ago. Why, then, may I conclude to the existence of God from the existence of this world? Because God, as we shall demonstrate, is not only the cause of the origin of the world; he is also the present, acting cause of its continuous existence. Many people imagine that God in creating the world behaved somewhat like the carpenter who made the desk—that he made the world, then left it to its own devices. In fact, God continues to keep the world in existence at every moment, he causes it continually to be. Conservation is nothing but a protracted creation. The world depends on God not in the way in which the desk depends on the carpenter, but rather in the way in which the beam of sunlight depends on the sun. From the fact that my desk exists I may rightly conclude that the wood and the nails from which it is made and the energy which keeps the atoms of the wood and the nails together continue to exist. The wood, the nails, the energy are intrinsic causes of the desk. They themselves are kept in being by the Supreme Cause.

When we state that it is impossible to go indefinitely from moved mover to moved mover, from one subordinated cause to the next, we intend to affirm this impossibility only for essentially subordinated causes, not for accidentally subordinated causes. That means that we reject the hen-egg argument. It seems evident that in this series there must have been a first hen or a first egg. We find it very hard to imagine a series regressing indefinitely into the past. But there is no contradiction in affirming such an indefinite regress. At any rate, should there be a first cause in such a series, we cannot demonstrate its *present* existence.

Instead of taking only one causal series, suppose we take all the series whose totality constitutes the universe. The present state of that universe at the moment t_0 may be explained by its state at the moment t_1, which is, in its turn, explained by its state at moment t_2, and so on. Is it possible to go on indefinitely in this series? Must we not necessarily arrive at a first moment when all these causal series were launched into action by some extra-mundane cause? On this point the opinion of philosophers is divided, but quite a number of them, including Aquinas, see no contradiction in admitting that such a series might extend indefinitely into the past. That is why St. Thomas claims that it cannot be strictly demonstrated by reason that the world has a beginning in time.[8]

On the other hand, the impossibility of an indefinite series of essentially subordinated causes is evident. Such causes act only inasmuch as they are acted upon *at the present moment* by the highest and first cause. Should there be no highest or first cause, there would be no activity anywhere along the whole line. In other words, in such a series, the subordinated causes are only *transmitting* agencies, the producing agency is the first cause. Should there be no first cause, the transmitting agency would have nothing to transmit, since no activity would be produced.

But could not the series of subordinated causes constitute a closed circle, in which every link transmits the action to the next one, without any first link? Somewhat like a merry-go-round? But a merry-go-round does not move by itself, it needs some outside power to make it revolve. In this hypothesis the exercise of the causality must still be explained. Where does

[8] See, for example, *S. Theol.*, I, 46, 2.

it originate? If in one of the links, that one would be the unmoved mover. If in the circle as a whole, then that circle would be the unmoved mover. If the causal influx comes from outside the circle, the first cause would also lie outside it.

In other words, there is a double direction of causality, a horizontal and a vertical direction. The horizontal direction leads back into the past, it is phenomenal causality, with accidentally subordinated causes, or simply antecedents and consequents. Z follows upon Y, which follows upon X, and so on, indefinitely. This direction explains happenings, events, the origins (*fieri*) of things. It is used in the natural sciences. But there is also a vertical direction of causality, which does not lead back into the past but which lies entirely in the present; it is metaphysical causality, with essentially subordinated causes. The *events* explained by the horizontal series happen to things, to *natures*. And these things or natures must be explained in their turn. That is why every link in the horizontal series of causes is suspended vertically to causes (or better, as we shall see, to a cause) which explain not simply the connection of the links but their very existence.

Some modern philosophers do not accept this distinction. They claim that it makes no difference whether the causes are essentially or accidentally subordinated. In both cases infinite series are possible, and we have sufficiently explained the present state of affairs when we have shown how it derives from the preceding one.

This is one of the crucial points in our discussion with the modern mentality, especially in the English-speaking countries with their strong positivistic leanings. Modern man suffers from metaphysical anemia because of an overdose of science. He is satisfied when he has *explained* the *occurrence* of *events,*

he does not want to *understand* the *nature* of *beings*. To explain what *happens,* an infinite series may suffice. But flight into the indefinite does not explain what *is*. God's existence is required to explain the *being* of that which *is*. Many moderns do not seem to understand what we mean when we speak of the *being* of that which *is*. How, then, could they be expected to look for a cause of it?

Typical is the position of Professor Paul Edwards, in his brief but excellent presentation of some of the strongest modern objections against the proof of God's existence. He knows of the distinction between accidentally and essentially subordinated causes, and he admits that it takes care of some of the objections made against the cosmological argument. Yet he writes:

> It is far from plausible on the other hand to claim that all natural objects require a cause *in esse*. . . . Most people would grant that particles like atoms did not cause themselves, since they would in that event have had to exist before they began existing. It is not at all evident, however, that these particles cannot be uncaused.[9]

The author admits that *beginnings* must be explained, but he claims that *being* does not need any explanation. And he is quite right when he states that many people share this opinion. They see that whatever comes to exist must have a

[9] *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy,* ed. Paul Edwards and Arthur Pap (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957), p. 452. It is surprising to see a well-informed philosopher share a widespread error, when he implies that the supporters of the causal argument hold "the proposition that everything must have a cause *in esse*" (*ibid.*). No Scholastic philosopher holds or ever held that proposition. They hold that every *contingent* being has a cause *in esse*.

cause, but they simply cannot see that, even if a natural thing had always existed, it still must have a cause of its existence. It is useful, therefore, to consider this difficulty more closely. We might start with an example. It is admitted that daylight is caused by the sun. The fact that it wanes and disappears as the sun sets and that it comes back with sunrise is an obvious proof of that connection. Suppose now that the sun should never set and that daylight should never vanish. Would this imply that daylight is not caused by the sun? It never begins, it exists, it is there. Yet it is at all times caused by the sun, even if sun and daylight have both existed from all eternity.

Our contention is that the same thing applies to all matter —or would apply if matter had existed forever. Is there any proof for our contention? There is, and it is to be found in man's intellect. In the presence of that eternal reality, man would ask questions, look for some explanation; for a reason, not for the beginning (since, in that case, there would be none), but for the existence of that reality. A man who does not stifle his intellect is conscious of a need to explain everything which is not self-explaining. Eternal matter is not self-explaining. Could it not be that matter might not exist? If the answer to that question is affirmative, then why does it exist? If the answer is negative, whence that necessity? Such questions can and should be asked, unless one decides *a priori* to exclude all questions about the being of things—that is, unless one professes some kind of positivism.

That is precisely what Edwards seems to do. Thus he writes:

> Normally, we are satisfied that we have explained a phenomenon if we have found its cause or if we have exhibited some other uniform connection between it and something else . . . . A phe-

nomenon Z has been explained if it has been traced back to a group of factors, a, b, c, d, etc., which are its causes . . . . These factors are the full and real explanation of Z quite regardless of whether they are pleasing or displeasing, admirable or contemptible, necessary or contingent.[10]

A clear and frank profession of positivism! Admirably confirmed by the example which follows. Edwards shows in all earnestness how Eisenhower's election in 1952 is perfectly explained by means of all the psychological, sociological, economic and other factors which induced the majority of voters to vote for him. We have not the slightest quarrel with this. But a philosopher does not want to explain why General Eisenhower was elected! That is not a philosophical problem, it is a problem for the sociologist or the student of political science. The philosopher wants to understand why Eisenhower and those who voted for him exist and are what they are.

It is, of course, impossible to demonstrate that God is the cause *in esse* (the metaphysical cause) of all contingent beings to those who deny *a priori* the existence of a cause *in esse*. Discussion is of no avail where common ground is lacking. Are we then reduced to silence in the presence of this rejection of ontology? Not quite. But it is evident that we cannot continue simply to repeat the traditional arguments when facing those who simply reject the most fundamental assumptions taken for granted in these arguments. Whether we like it or not, we must delve deeper. We shall, therefore, try to show that while the positivist and the phenomenist explicitly deny the principle of metaphysical causality, their intellect continues to affirm it implicitly. When they reject the principle of metaphysical

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 456.

causality, there is no contradiction between the concepts they use in their denial, but there is a contradiction between what they affirm and the act by which they affirm it. That is what we shall try to show when studying the deeper nature of the principle of metaphysical causality.

A final word about infinite series of causes. We have admitted the possibility and the existence of such series in the field of phenomenal causality, for accidentally subordinated causes, for successions of antecedents and consequents. We deny their existence and even their possibility in the domain of metaphysical causality. We should even go further. It is a mistake to mention any kind of causal series or of subordinated causes in the demonstration of God's existence.[11] It leads the modern mind into error, pushing it into the familiar groove of scientific thinking from which no ascent to God is possible.

What, then, about the example mentioned above of the hand pushing the stick which moves the stone? These are indeed essentially subordinated causes of a sort. The hand is really the cause not only of the *origin* of the stick's movement but of the continuation or *existence* of that movement. The stick moves only because, and inasmuch as, it is moved by the hand. In that sense these causes are essentially subordinated causes. But the hand is not the cause of the existence of the stick. There are no examples of causal series in which one thing is the cause of the very being or existence of some other thing, *distinct* from the first. That is why the mention of series of essentially subordinated causes in the proof of God's existence is misleading and should be avoided.

[11] Cf. D. Dubarle, O.P., "Pensée scientifique et preuves traditionnelles de l'existence de Dieu," *De la connaissance de Dieu* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1958), pp. 74 ff.

If we claim that a series of essentially subordinated causes leads us to God, as to the first cause, we unavoidably create the impression that God is the first link of a chain—something which most certainly he is not. In the example mentioned above, God is not the origin of a movement which, over hand and stick, finally reaches the stone. As we shall show later, he directly co-operates in causing the movement of the hand, and of the stick, and of the stone. The transition from created reality to the Creator is direct and immediate. If we cannot discover the creative influx directly in every creature, it is to be feared that we shall never find it at all.[12] Mentioning series of subordinated causes is a clear invitation to the scientifically-minded to deny that immediacy and get lost in an infinite regression. That our mind passes immediately from the finite to the infinite will be shown in our vindication of the principle of metaphysical causality.

(4) *The unmoved mover is God.* We know what is meant by this technical statement. The being which gives all other beings their perfections without receiving any perfection from any other being is the infinitely perfect being. In other words: a being which makes other beings pass from potency to act without passing itself from potency to act is Pure Act, Act without any limitation.

But that statement is not immediately obvious. It is quite

[12] Such statements and, more generally, the very way in which we set about to demonstrate the existence of God should make the student aware of the mysterious, overwhelming, "totally other" nature of the supreme reality which God is. Although, owing to our human constitution, we cannot help thinking and speaking of God as of some *object,* it is becoming quite evident that God is totally different from ordinary objects of our knowledge, so that the word "object" applies to him only analogically.

evident that a being which gives another being some perfection must possess that perfection. If it did not receive it from some other being, it must have possessed that perfection by and of itself. But does that immediately imply that such a being possesses absolutely all perfection, in an infinitely perfect way, without any limitation?

Suppose that the whole universe possesses an amount of ontological perfection designated by X. It is quite evident that if the reality and perfection of such a universe is to be explained, our unmoved mover must at least possess that amount of perfection. As a matter of fact, we should be willing to admit that it is endowed with a considerably greater amount of perfection, let us say X^{10}. But why should it follow that this perfection is infinite?

Hence our demonstration has led us to a first cause possessing a very great but limited amount of perfection, from which all other perfections are derived; one which has received its own perfection from no other being.

St. Thomas concludes immediately that this being is God, understood as Infinite Perfection, Pure Act. In his metaphysical system that conclusion is obvious. He demonstrates it in the *Summa Theologica* in the Questions following upon the "Five Ways." If this first cause is not infinitely perfect, it is capable of acquiring further perfection. But to be capable of further perfection means to be in potency to it. Hence the first cause would be a mixture of act and potency, which amounts to saying that it is moved. But if it is moved, it is moved by another. In other words, the finite first cause at which we seem to have arrived is not the ultimate explanation of reality. We must continue our quest until we arrive at

a being without any potency, the Pure Act, one which explains everything without needing any explanation itself.

Therefore the last step of our demonstration depends again on the meaning and the value of the principle according to which everything which is in any way in potency depends ultimately on that which is in no way in potency, on the Pure Act. Once more we are referred to the principle of causality.

THE OTHER FOUR WAYS OF ST. THOMAS

It is not necessary to go over the four other ways of St. Thomas in the same thorough manner. The student is invited to do this for himself. The following brief remarks may help him in this task. The interpretation here suggested of the different *viae* is not the only possible one, but it seems to be the most plausible.

The Second Way

The second way is from the nature of efficient cause. In the world of sensible things we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or one only. Now to take away the causes is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no

first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

We may paraphrase this proof as follows: There are causes and effects in the universe. Both must be explained. The effects are explained by their causes. If the cause itself is an effect, it must be explained by another cause. But it is impossible to go on indefinitely from effect to cause. Therefore we must finally arrive at a cause which is not an effect, an uncaused cause, and this is God.

About this second way the following questions arise:

1. Are there causes and effects in the universe? Very few people would doubt this. A hypercritical doubter may be referred to his own question about this statement, because it is difficult for him to deny that this question is an effect of his own intellectual activity. Some philosophers will claim that the only causality which can be demonstrated is phenomenal causality, which consists in the fact that certain antecedents are regularly followed by some consequents. Against such doubters we must try to show that the principle of causality, which man's intellect affirms implicitly and necessarily, implies more than this kind of causality.

2. Is it evident that it is impossible to regress indefinitely in the series of caused causes? The same distinction must be made here which was suggested previously. This is impossible in essentially subordinated causes; it is quite possible in accidentally subordinated causes.

3. Is the uncaused cause God? Can it be shown that an uncaused cause which would not be pure act is contradictory?

This can be shown if we admit the principle of metaphysical causality. If the uncaused cause is not pure act, it is in potency to some extent. To that extent it is "moved" by another being —that is, it is not really uncaused. The same remarks apply here which were made about the last step of the preceding proof.

The Third Way

The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to be corrupted, and consequently, it is possible for them to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which can not-be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything can not-be, then at one time there was nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist begins to exist only through something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence—which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has already been proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but admit the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.[13]

[13] A different version of the same argument is to be found in the *Summa contra Gentiles,* I, 15.

The literal text of this way contains many technical difficulties of interpretation and adds some superfluous Aristotelian elements not found in the *Summa contra Gentiles,* I, 15. Therefore I shall give a streamlined and simplified modern version of the basic underlying argument.

There are contingent beings, beings which, of and by themselves, are indifferent to being and non-being. This is evident from the fact that they begin to exist and cease existing. Such beings do not have in themselves the reason for their existence; otherwise they would always exist. Therefore, when they exist, they have the reason for their existence in some other being. But it is impossible to go on indefinitely in beings which have the reason for their existence in other beings. Hence we must finally arrive at a being which has the reason for its existence in itself, a necessary being,[14] and that being is God.

With regard to this third way the following questions come up:

1. Are there really contingent beings? If by "contingent" we mean beings which do not have in themselves the reason for their existence, the statement is clearly demonstrated by the fact that some beings start to exist and others stop existing. And it seems that this meaning of the word "contingent" is sufficient to validate our demonstration.

2. The same remark as above about the impossibility of an infinite regression in beings which have the reason for their existence in some other being applies here.

3. Is the being which has the reason for its existence in itself identically God? Yes, because existence is of the essence

[14] The word "necessary" is taken here in its standard modern sense of "that which cannot not exist."

of that being, its essence is to exist. Therefore its existence is not limited, and this being is the infinite being, God.

This reasoning is valid within the framework of Thomistic metaphysics. Should this framework be challenged, we should eventually have to fall back again upon the principle of metaphysical causality.

The Fourth Way

The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble, and the like. But *more* and *less* are predicated of different things according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and consequently, something which is the most in being, for these things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaph.,* II. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus, as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things, as is said in the same book. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.

The perfections which can be used in this proof are only the pure or transcendental perfections, which are convertible (or, interchangeable) with being, which do not, of themselves, imply the limitation of matter. Such are life, consciousness, goodness, truth, love and liberty. About these perfections we may reason as follows:

Beings which share the same perfection in different degrees

do not possess that perfection by themselves. For that which one possesses by oneself, one possesses fully. If these beings possessed these perfections by themselves, there would be no reason for the different gradations in which these perfections are shared among them.

But that which one does not possess by oneself, one must have received from another. And it is not possible to go on indefinitely in the series of the beings which have received their perfection from another. Hence we arrive finally at a being which possesses all these perfections by and of itself, in their fullness, and this being is God.

Here again we meet the usual questions about the impossibility of an indefinite regress and about the reasons we have for identifying a being who possesses these transcendental perfections in their fullness with the Pure Act, or God. There can be no doubt about the validity of that identification within the framework of Thomistic metaphysics. For St. Thomas, goodness, truth, consciousness, etc., are convertible with being. Hence to possess any of them in its fullness, without any limitation, is identically to possess the fullness of being. Here again a complete demonstration would eventually require the principle of metaphysical causality.

The Fifth Way

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly.

Now, whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

Kant called this proof "the oldest, the clearest, and the most accordant with the common reason of mankind."[15] It continues to have a considerable appeal for the popular mind; it is still used by some scientifically-minded philosophers or philosophically-minded scientists (such as E. Whittaker, P. Lecomte du Noüy and P. Teilhard de Chardin),[16] but it has lost favor with most scientists and most modern philosophers. Yet, as we shall explain later, it continues to have real value.[17]

What kind of finality shall we use? The finality of the universe as a whole? The order and harmony existing in the world? It is not so easy to establish the existence of such a universal harmony, and if we succeeded in doing so, we should still have to explain the many cases where order and harmony seem to be lacking.

What St. Thomas had in mind seems to be a more restricted starting point. We might paraphrase his proof as follows:

1. Some beings devoid of intelligence act for an end. This is demonstrated by the fact that in general they act in the same way and produce the same effects. Thus grapevines produce grapes and cats give birth to kittens.

Of course, scientists and many philosophers will explain

[15] *Critique of Pure Reason,* A. 623.

[16] E. Whittaker, *Space and Spirit,* P. Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny,* P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man.*

[17] See Gaston Isaye, S.J., "La métaphysique des simples," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique,* 82(1960), pp. 688–698. See also p. 109 of the present book.

this constancy in nature by appealing to determinism and to laws, by explaining that the same antecedents lead regularly to the same consequents, without any intervention of finality. This may be true, and on the scientific level such an explanation is sufficient. But only those who claim that exact science explains everything will consider this exhaustive. Those who do not subscribe to that positivistic tenet will admit that the laws by means of which science explains the phenomena must be explained in their turn. And it is difficult to see how, on the philosophical level, it is possible to explain the marvelous adaptation of means to ends visible everywhere in the cosmos without ultimately admitting some finality.

2. This finality supposes an intelligence. If a being acts for an end, its activity is influenced by that end. But in order to influence an activity, the end must exist. Since it does not yet exist physically, it must exist intentionally—that is, in some knowing subject. Furthermore, the end must not only be known, it must be known as end. But this supposes intellectual knowledge. Hence finality supposes an intelligence.

3. That intelligence must ultimately be the divine intelligence. This can be shown briefly in two ways:

a. The finality which we admit is a natural finality, written in the very nature of things. It comes, therefore, from the cause of that nature, from its creator, from God.

b. Some finality may be explained by a finite intelligence. But this intelligence itself has a finality which must be explained. And since it is impossible to regress indefinitely, we must ultimately arrive at an intelligence which is not led by an unconscious finality, which does not act as a nature before it acts as an intelligence. But such an intelligence is found only in the being who *is* his intelligence. And this is God.[18]

[18] Cf. Grégoire, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

2

The Principle of Causality

It should be obvious now that the several ways of St. Thomas are built on the same general model. We may distinguish, in every one of them, these four essential steps: (1) an undeniable fact taken from experience (movement, efficient causality, and so on); (2) the transition from that fact to its ultimate explanation; (3) the exclusion of an infinite regression; (4) the identification of the ultimate explanation with God.

There is generally not much controversy about the first step of the proof, about its starting point. But the three other steps have given rise to many objections and been the occasion of many difficulties. When we try to answer them, we are forced back upon the principle of metaphysical causality. But this principle itself has been under fire since the first days of Nominalism, and it continues to be doubted or rejected by many modern thinkers. We must therefore have a good long look at it and try to justify it.

In St. Thomas's time, the principle of metaphysical causality was never called into doubt, and Aquinas did not feel obliged to vindicate it. Therefore the justification here presented will

not be found in so many words in his works. Had the principle been challenged by his contemporaries, he would have found in his metaphysical system all the elements required for meeting that challenge. Our proof uses these elements, organizing them in order to meet the modern challenges.[1]

The principle of causality can be formulated in many ways. We may say very simply: "Whatever begins to exist has a cause." In more technical terms: "Every contingent being has a cause."

For common sense that principle is immediately evident and requires no demonstration. This attitude of common sense (and of traditional philosophy) is sound. We shall see that the principle of causality is indeed evident, that it is implicitly affirmed in every one of our acts of knowledge, so that, if we deny it or doubt it, we affirm it in our very act of denial or of doubt.

Although this sounds simple and evident—or rather, because this is so simple and evident—it is not easy to put into words and to demonstrate. As a matter of fact, we do not intend to demonstrate the principle of causality, since a demonstration supposes that we derive it from a previous princi-

[1] The proof here presented is borrowed from Joseph Maréchal, S.J., *Le Point de départ de la Métaphysique,* Cahier V: *Le Thomisme devant la philosophie critique* (Brussels: L'Edition Universelle, 2d ed., 1949). The other authors who have developed the same line of thought, and to whom I am heavily indebted, are: Auguste Grégoire, S.J., *Immanence et Transcendance* (already cited); Gaston Isaye, S.J., "La finalité de l'intelligence et l'objection kantienne," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain,* 51 (1953), pp. 42-100; Joseph Defever, S.J., *La Preuve réelle de Dieu* (Brussels: L'Edition Universelle, 1953); Karl Rahner, S.J., *Geist in Welt* (München: Kösel, 2d ed., 1957). These four works are required reading for anyone who wishes to pursue seriously the study of natural theology.

ple, which is impossible. The difficulty of our task seems, paradoxically, to derive from its very simplicity. The human mind finds difficulty in two kinds of matters, the very complex and the utterly simple. And a case could be made for the statement that it is especially when things are utterly simple that our minds find them most difficult. If metaphysics, of which the principle of causality is one of the most essential ingredients, could be embraced in a single glance, its evidence would be overwhelming for every human mind. But to vindicate the principle we have to go at it piecemeal, concept after concept and judgment after judgment, and in this way we create false problems and raise artificial difficulties. It would, therefore, be a sounder and more natural attitude if we accepted the principle without more ado, as so many great minds have done before us.

But it is difficult for us to do so because other great minds have cast doubts on the principle. We may call these doubts ill-founded and say that they needlessly confuse matters which of themselves are simple and evident. But the fact is that these doubts have been expressed, and we must consider them and satisfy, if not the doubters, at least ourselves, that they are indeed ill-founded and incapable of detracting from the validity of the principle of causality.

In modern times the principle of causality has been attacked especially by Hume and Kant. Hume claimed that it was based entirely on custom and habit. When we know an object A, we know only that object A. Why should knowing A make us know another object B, which is called A's cause? When seeing, hearing or touching A, I do not see, hear or touch B. The knowledge of A has nothing to do with the knowledge of B. But does the idea of A, produced in my mind by these sensations, not irresistibly suggest the idea of B? Hume admits that

it often does. He admits that there may be a psychological association between the ideas of A and of B. He attributes that association to frequent repetition. When we have often had a sense experience of A preceded by B, the two ideas become connected in our minds, so that if one of them is produced the other follows immediately. Thus, thunder is associated in our minds with lightning. But this does not at all imply that B has anything to do with the production of A. We have a temporal sequence but no causality. The so-called principle of causality is not a logical, much less is it an ontological, principle; it is merely the result of a psychological habit. This extreme position of Hume, productive of absolute agnosticism about anything which cannot be sensed, is the germ of all later forms of positivism.

Kant's attack upon the principle of causality was more moderate, and perhaps for that very reason more dangerous. He did not deny all value to the principle, but he restricted its legitimate application to the domain of sense experience.

We shall consider only Kant's objection. He has given an excellent refutation of *part* of Hume's objection. We shall try to extend his refutation to cover Hume's *entire* objection. And by thus completing Kant's refutation of Hume, we shall also have refuted Kant's own difficulties against the principle of metaphysical causality.[2] This calls for some explanation.

Hume, as we have seen, claimed that what we call the prin-

[2] Hume is a great, and Kant is a very great, philosopher. It is not easy to explain the system of such great thinkers in a few paragraphs, and it is rather ludicrous to try to refute it in a few pages. Yet an introductory textbook has to do precisely that. It has to simplify, and, at times, to oversimplify. The intelligent student realizes, of course, that when the text speaks of refuting such philosophers, it means "This is the general direction in which you would have to proceed in order to refute such a system."

ciple of causality is merely a psychological habit. Against this statement Kant demonstrated with great skill that the principle of empirical causality is an *a priori* condition of the possibility of any content of the mind. Everybody will admit that there are certain contents in his mind, that he thinks of objects. Much of what he thinks may be erroneous, but there can be no error in the statement that he thinks of objects. But if there are contents in his mind, everything which is required to make such contents possible is realized and true. Kant has shown that using and accepting the category of empirical causality is one of these conditions of the possibility of any content in the mind. Therefore, to deny the principle of *empirical* causality involves a contradiction, since such denial supposes the category of causality as one of its *a priori* conditions of possibility. Hence nobody can without contradiction deny the principle of empirical causality. By empirical causality Kant meant causality as it applies to the objects of our sense experience, to things as they appear to our senses. It is a causality which affects not the being, but only the becoming of objects—or, more precisely, the order of their consecutive occurrence in time.

Kant denied the validity of the principle of metaphysical causality, which applies to things as they are in themselves, which affects not merely the *becoming,* but the very *being* of that which we know. The reason for this denial is that Kant restricted the legitimate use of the categories—i.e., the fundamental concepts according to which we order our knowledge—to the world of the senses. We have a tendency to use them when thinking of immaterial objects, but their use in this sphere, in Kant's view, is illegitimate and invalid, an unwarranted extension to the noumenal field of what applies

only to the phenomenal field. We shall now use against Kant's objection the very method which he used against Hume. We shall try to show that the principle of *metaphysical* causality is an *a priori* condition of possibility of any content in our mind, that we cannot think without implicitly affirming it; hence that its denial involves a contradiction.

In other words: Kant claimed that the categories can be legitimately used only when backed up by some intuition. And by intuition he meant only *sense* intuition. We are willing to admit that the legitimate use of the categories requires an intuition, provided the latter term be extended to the imperfect but real *intellectual* intuition which we possess. We shall try to show that we have intuitive knowledge of the activity of our intellect. Owing to that intuition we are capable of transcending the phenomenal order, and because of that intuition we are entitled to extend the principle of causality to the noumenal order.

Other methods have been used in order to vindicate the principle of causality. Before presenting our own approach we may have a look at these attempts and at the reasons for their failure. It might be claimed that the principle of causality is analytic, that its predicate is contained within the comprehension of its subject. Thus, if we state the principle of causality as follows: Every effect depends on a cause—the very definition of the subject "effect" contains the note "depending on a cause." Hence, under this form at least, the principle of causality is evidently analytic. This is true if we take the word *effect* formally, as meaning "an effect, inasmuch as it is an effect." But we can apply the principle in that sense only when we know an effect as effect—that is, as depending on a cause.

We must know that the object depends on a cause before we can know it as an effect. In this sense the principle of causality is analytic, but it is perfectly useless in our attempts to discover the cause of finite reality. On the other hand, if we take the word *effect* materially, in the sense of "something which happens to be an effect, but which is not known as such," the principle is not analytic. In this sense of the principle, the word *effect* might be replaced by *finite being*. The principle would then become "Every finite being depends on a cause." This principle is no longer strictly analytic, its predicate is not contained within the comprehension of the subject.

Other attempts to show that the principle of causality is analytic are not more successful. Thus one author argues as follows:

> It is also clear that whatever exists must either receive its existence from itself or from some other being. There is no *tertium quid* possible: it cannot have received existence from nothing.[3]

This looks very much like begging the question. If we take it for granted that whatever exists must receive its existence from something, the proof is valid. But that is precisely the point which must be demonstrated, it is the principle of causality. There is a *tertium quid:* it has received existence from nothing, it has not received its existence.

Here is another example:

> The truth and analytical character of the principle of causality may be briefly shown as follows: A being whose existence is not absolutely necessary,—and all changeable beings are such,—has

[3] G. H. Joyce, S.J., *Principles of Natural Theology,* (New York: Longmans, 1923), p. 47.

the sufficient reason for its existence in itself or in some other being. It cannot, however, have such reason in itself. . . . Therefore the reason for its existence must be found in some other being. That being is its efficient cause.[4]

The author demonstrates the principle of causality by reducing it to the principle of sufficient reason. This is all right, provided he shows that the principle of sufficient reason is analytical. This he tries to do by stating that "a being either has its sufficient reason in itself or in another." We shall accept this as soon as it has been demonstrated to us that "every being must have a sufficient reason." The author takes for granted what he should demonstrate.

Here is another way of begging the question. In his excellent book the author writes about the principle "Whatever is moved is moved by another":

> The evidence of this principle is analytic, that is, it results from the simple analysis of the terms: to change is to become other, to stop being identical; *no being can, by itself, stop being itself,* whether by losing what it has or by acquiring what it has not.[5]

The value of this demonstration rests on the statement which I have underlined. That statement is true if you admit that any change occurring in a being must have a cause, which is precisely what must be demonstrated.

It may be surprising and even disheartening to see that a certain number of reputable authors have endeavored to dem-

[4] W. J. Brosnan, S.J., *God Infinite, the World and Reason* (New York: Fordham, 1959), p. 73.

[5] Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Dieu caché,* p. 235. (My translation and italics.)

onstrate the principle of causality by assuming its validity, and I would feel embarrassed in pointing this out, if it were not for the fact that I shall do the very same thing myself. If, as intimated, the principle is a condition for the possibility of any content in the mind, it is obvious that every demonstration of the principle must presuppose its truth, since such a demonstration itself is a content of the mind. The principle of causality is the very life-breath of our intellect; we cannot justify the principle without using it in our demonstration, because we cannot justify it without using our intellect. How can we demonstrate it without a vicious circle? We shall not demonstrate it, but only vindicate it. We shall try to show that one who denies it does exactly what we do: he uses it, he takes it for granted; he affirms it in his very denial. To deny it implies a contradiction.

Before proceeding to this vindication of the principle of metaphysical causality, we must decide what formulation of it we shall use. For our immediate purpose the best formula will be "That which is in any way limited depends on the unlimited being," it being understood that unlimited is taken here in the strongest possible sense of that word, in the meaning of absolutely infinite, without any admixture of potency. Hence the unlimited being is the Pure Act, the being whose existence is not limited by any essence, whose essence in fact it is to exist.

We note at once that the justification of the principle of metaphysical causality under this form includes a demonstration of God's existence. For God is the unlimited being, the Pure Act, the Being whose essence it is to exist.

We have already explained the reason for this surprising situation. In the supreme unity and simplicity of metaphysics every truth is contained in every other truth. The principle

of metaphysical causality cannot be justified without a demonstration of God's existence, and God's existence cannot be demonstrated unless we somehow justify our use of the principle of metaphysical causality.[6] From this we surmise that both these truths must be ultimately based upon one fundamental quasi-intuition of the intellect in which both are given simultaneously in a pre-reflective unity. The main difficulty lies precisely in the fact that we must make this pre-reflective unity conscious and reflected; in so doing we shall destroy the unity and create doubts and obscurity where the human mind in its spontaneous apprehension of the unity should find only light and certitude.

In trying to vindicate the principle of causality, we shall proceed as follows: (1) giving a brief outline of our vindication, with only a minimum of explanation and demonstration; (2) going over the same outline again, with more thorough explanations and proofs; (3) considering and trying to answer some of the most obvious objections; (4) completing our study with some additional remarks about the vindication of the principle of causality.

OUTLINE OF A VINDICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE

That vindication may be summarized in the following statements, which have been numbered for easy reference:

1. I know something.
2. To know something is a good for my intellect.

[6] Cf. Defever, *La Preuve réelle de Dieu*, pp. 29 ff.

3. Therefore my intellect strives towards an end.
4. Every known object is implicitly referred to the end of my intellectual dynamism.
5. The end of my intellectual dynamism is the unlimited being.
6. Therefore every known object is implicitly referred to the unlimited being.

1. *I know something.*

This is an undeniable fact. To deny it implies a contradiction. Nobody can deny that he knows something without asserting that he knows his not-knowing.

2. *To know something is a good for my intellect.*

This too is obvious. We want to know. We ask questions, we are constantly inquiring. If someone denies this statement, we shall have to discuss it with him. We shall try to find out which of us is right in this matter. We are looking for an answer to that question, and that answer is something which both of us need and desire; it is some knowledge which is good for our intellect.

3. *Therefore my intellect strives towards an end.*

Knowing is good for my intellect, because it wants to know, it strives towards knowledge. And when it has acquired some knowledge, it wants more and ever more. Hence my intellect strives towards some end. There is a real finality in my intellectual activity, there is in me an intellectual dynamism.

4. *Every known object is implicitly referred to the end of my intellectual dynamism.*

I want to know many things. None of them, therefore, is the fully satisfying end of my intellect. But each one of them is a stage which brings my intellect nearer to that end. It is

therefore somewhat like a means which my intellect uses in order to reach its final goal.

5. *The end of my intellectual dynamism is the unlimited being.*

The end of a real finality is that towards which the striving subject tends and beyond which it cannot proceed. My intellectual finality tends towards the unlimited being and cannot proceed beyond it. Any other being known by me is known at once as limited; it does not satisfy my intellectual appetite but evokes further questions, drives the intellect on. Knowing a limit *as limit* is possible if—and only if—I am, in fact or at least in striving, beyond that limit. Since whatever is known by me is known at once as limited, I am, at least in striving, beyond all limit; my striving tends towards no other end than the unlimited being.

6. *Therefore every known object is implicitly referred to the unlimited being.*

This follows from the previous statements. It is a way of saying that my intellect "lives, exercises" the principle of causality in every one of its acts. To deny that principle is an act of knowledge; therefore it implies the affirmation of the principle.

THE SAME VINDICATION FURTHER EXPLAINED

1. *I know something.*

This is our starting point. No demonstration can be stronger than the initial statement on which it is based. Any doubt about our starting point will affect our final conclusion. But

there cannot in this case be the slightest doubt. To deny or question the initial statement is implicitly to affirm it.

Actually, nobody in his right mind can or will deny that he knows something. Man's mind is necessarily confronted with some objects of knowledge, and man is aware of this. Natural theology addresses itself to a thinking man, and a thinking man necessarily knows and knows that he knows. Our starting point therefore is as unshakeable as is possible in human knowledge. It consists in the absolute necessity of affirmation. No scientific knowledge can boast of a more solid foundation.

Moreover, that foundation is rooted in reality, it is a fact of experience, not a mere concept, not an abstract principle. *What* I know may involve concepts and abstract principles. But *that* I know is an incontrovertible fact, implicit, as we have shown, in its very denial. The starting point of our demonstration is real, and equally real will be whatever is implied or postulated by it. We must insist upon this.

In his famous demonstration Leibniz supposed that the possibility of God's existence implied his existence, since God is possible if and only if he exists. The weakness of his proof consisted in the fact that he merely postulated the possibility of God. But suppose that the fact that *I of necessity know* should as necessarily imply the possibility of God: then that possibility would be as firmly established as the fact of my knowing, and we should have a solid demonstration of God's existence. In that case, we would not, as Leibniz did, pass from a concept to a fact, the fact of God's existence, but from a fact, over a concept, to another fact.

2. *To know something is a good for my intellect.*

This second statement is essential to our demonstration. It

supposes a dynamic conception of our intellectual life, as opposed to the static conception which has too often prevailed. The term "intellectual life" is precise: it is a real life; the progress of knowledge is a real growth. Man wants to know, his mind craves knowledge. Every new judgment which man affirms feeds an appetite deep in his intellect. Concepts and judgments do not succeed each other like pearls on a string, they are really the successive stages of an inner development, of a process of growth; they are a passage from potency to act, a real movement in the metaphysical sense of that word.

It seems that without such a dynamic conception of knowledge, it is impossible to escape Kant's agnostic conclusions. Although in his minute descriptions of cognition Kant used many expressions which seem to imply activity and movement, his conception of the intellectual life was essentially static. Such a static conception leads logically to the agnostic conclusions of his system.

The many successive acts which comprise my intellectual activity constitute a real movement, are carried along on a real finality. When I know something, when I affirm something, I am also aware of this, my activity. I am aware that this activity is not something which is forced upon me against my inclination, or which just happens to me and might as well never have happened. I am conscious that I want to know, and to know more and more. Man is directly aware of the dynamic nature of his intellect.

In that sense it can really be said that the demonstration of God's existence is based upon a fundamental intuition, the intuition of our own intellectual dynamism. We must eventually translate that intuition into concepts, but it remains an

intuition, and the concepts we use derive their real content from it. This is not a sense intuition, but an intellectual intuition, the only kind of intellectual intuition which man seems to possess in this life.[7]

We must insist upon the fact that our demonstration starts with an intuition. For our purpose is not to arrive at a concept of God, but to demonstrate the real existence of God. But if we started with concepts, we would never get beyond concepts. Concepts, as such, can never demonstrate the existence of a reality. This can be known only from experience, or as implied in some experience.[8] And an experience is known only in immediate knowledge—that is, in some intuition.

But suppose that your interlocutor should claim that he does not have such an intuition of his own intellectual dynamism. Is it possible to show him that he errs in this denial? To some extent, yes. He denies the existence of his own intellectual dynamism. To your affirmations he opposes his denials, to your arguments he answers with counterarguments. Thus while he is denying awareness of the active movement of his intellect, that intellect of his keeps actively moving. He is able to deny the dynamism of his intellect and refute your assertion only in yielding to that dynamism. It is true that you cannot make him "see" this directly, but you can show the

[7] Intuition is immediate knowledge, knowledge which does not require images or concepts. External sense knowledge is intuitive in that sense: we see the tree directly, immediately, not in some image of it. Our ordinary intellectual knowledge, on the other hand, is not intuitive. We know that tree by means of and in the concept we have of it. But when we know that tree, we are immediately aware of knowing it; this awareness needs no concept, it is intuitive. *S. Theol.*, I, 14, 2 ad 3. Cf. Defever, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–21.

[8] This implication might be demonstrated by means of concepts.

inconsistency of an attitude which denies in words what it affirms in action.

3. *Therefore my intellect strives towards an end.*

We have insisted enough on this point in the previous step. Let us consider an objection which may come up in the mind of some readers. They admit that we know things, that we want to know them, that there is an appetite for knowledge in every human being, that the intellect strives towards many ends. But why would this involve the existence of one ultimate end? Is it not enough to say that the end of the intellect is precisely to perform the activity of knowing, just as the end of the amateur pianist is to play the piano, and not to strive towards one ultimate performance? When we go sightseeing, our end is not the contemplation of one supreme spectacle but the constant satisfaction of our curiosity. Every sight we see is a means in this sense, that it helps us satisfy that curiosity, but it is not a means in the sense that it brings us nearer to some ultimate goal. Why could not the same be said of our intellectual knowledge? The only end which any known object serves is the satisfaction of our intellectual curiosity. In other words, what we want to know is indefinitely more objects, not one ultimate object which every object we know would somehow bring us nearer to. We have met that objection before; it is the objection of the infinite regression.

The only way to answer it is, as suggested above, to go back to the fundamental intuition which is the basis of our whole vindication: the real reason why our intellect is not satisfied with any of the objects it meets is the fact that each object is *finite, limited, not self-explaining*. When the intellect surges beyond the object given in the present, it is looking directly and primarily, not towards the next object, but

towards the total explanation of the present one; it is pointing towards the unlimited reality, the non-finite being, the infinite. As we have said, a limit can be known as limit only by one who, either in fact or in desire, is already beyond that limit. Every time my intellect knows an object, it knows it at once as limited; therefore it is at once, in desire, past every limit, with the infinite being. That is the same as to say that it strives towards the infinite being.

In that way we can demonstrate that our intellect strives towards an end in every act of knowledge; moreover, anticipating what follows in our vindication, we have already explained the nature of that end, which is none other than the unlimited reality.

4. *Every known object is implicitly referred to the end of my intellectual dynamism.*

This statement follows logically from the previous ones. If our cognitive activity is, as we have tried to show, a real movement striving towards an end, then everything we know is, through that very movement, referred to that end. We say that it is *implicitly* referred, because we are not at once aware of this referring. We "exercise" it before becoming aware of it. Our intellect may be compared to a mighty river flowing towards the ocean. Every trickle of water reaching it from both banks is irresistibly carried towards the ocean. Likewise everything which enters our mind is carried towards the ultimate end of our intellectual movement.

We have reached this conclusion by reasoning. But it is a special kind of reasoning, in which, as we pointed out above, the concepts are always backed up by a fundamental intuition. So it is advisable to look back at that intuition once more. Whenever I know an object, I am aware of knowing it. And

I am also aware, or can easily become aware, of the following fundamental fact: whatever I know is known as limited and finite. It is not fully satisfying; I want to know more, both intensively and extensively. Intensively: because I want to know more about this object itself. It is not fully self-explaining, it gives rise to many questions. Extensively: I want to know many more objects besides this one. When looking deep into my mind through self-reflection, I may notice how every object I know satisfies a previous desire of my intellect and is at once engulfed in a new burst of desire which surges beyond it. There is, to be sure, in every act of knowledge, a moment of rest and of quiet contemplation, but that moment is suspended between two periods of striving, one previous to it, which led to the desired rest, and one subsequent, which "exceeds" it with the full intensity of man's unsatisfied yearning for more and ever more being. And thus the knowledge of the present moment is seen intuitively to be an intermediate stage in an unfinished journey, it is "experienced" as referred actively to the ultimate end of that journey. The concepts which we use in our reasoning have done nothing but translate the underlying intuition.

It is very important to observe here that our vindication of the principle of causality does not proceed in a merely subjective way, totally within the human mind, without the intervention of objective reality. It is in and because of my knowledge of *objects* that I become aware of the dynamism of my intellect, even as it is because of that dynamism that the object is known right away as limited or finite. The knowing intellect and the object known should not be separated. Objects lead me to God only inasmuch as they are known, and my intellect actually moves towards him only when know-

ing reality. It is the objectively incomplete, ungrounded, unfinished nature of the objects in themselves which drives my intellect past them, ever higher, towards the unlimited reality. But I become aware of these features in the object only because of the very movement of my intellect. Finiteness and contingency are not phenomenal qualities of the object which might be perceived by the senses. They are not logical notes of the object, which might be discovered by analyzing its definition. It is the meeting of the object and of the intellect in the act of knowledge, in which the intellect is at once "already beyond" the object which it knows, which reveals the objective finiteness and contingency of that object.

When we say that every known object is implicitly referred to the end of our intellectual dynamism, we may wonder whether this is not merely the principle of causality, translated into terms of final causality. How then can we use it as a logical step in our vindication of the principle of causality?

To some extent this objection is well taken, and we plead guilty. The reader has been warned that we would eventually commit that apparent paralogism. That is why we do not speak of a *demonstration* of the principle of causality, but of a *vindication,* or a justification. We are trying to show that the principle of causality is, so to speak, the very heartbeat of our intellect. And since in any effort to vindicate it we must use that intellect, it is impossible not to assume it in the very process of justification.

It is important to note, however, that we do not assume it as a theoretical principle, supplied by our previous study of philosophy, but rather as a principle which translates into concepts what our intellect is actually *living*. By its very upward surge, which drives it at once and always *already beyond*

anything given to it, our intellect *exercises* a basic finality which our statement simply puts into words.

We should even go further. All finality and every activity which we discover around us is understood, ultimately, only in function of this, our fundamental finality and activity.[9] These two notions are metaphysical notions which we cannot acquire from mere sense experience, but which presuppose, at their vital center, some intellectual experience. Once we have that basic experience, we are enabled to recognize finality and activity around us.[10]

What we have been saying will help us to a better understanding of the peculiar nature of the task in which we are engaged. The several statements of our vindication are not distinct logical steps by means of which we pass gradually to some new, unsuspected knowledge. They are really different ways of translating into concepts, always more fully, the same fundamental intuition by which we are aware that our intellect carries us irresistibly towards a reality lying beyond any finite reality. God's existence cannot be demonstrated by mere concepts and logic. It supposes some fundamental experience and intuition. If we want to justify that experience and intuition either for ourselves or for others, we must use concepts, but these concepts will have to refer continually to the intuition from which alone they derive their demonstrative value.

5. *The end of my intellectual movement is the unlimited being.*

We continue to translate our intuition into concepts and

[9] Cf. Isaye, "La finalité de l'intelligence. . . . ," p. 69.

[10] Therefore, in his *Dieu caché,* Professor Van Steenberghen, who insists so much on finite activity, seems to take for granted what Maréchal makes explicit.

words. We are at once aware that whatever we know is limited. This awareness is not always explicit, but it is at least given implicitly. Once I have picked up some piece of knowledge, I may rest in its possession for awhile; then I start again to look for more knowledge either about the same object or about others. The limitation of the present object may be clearly known in a concept. But generally it is known only as a dim presentiment in the very movement of my mind, which does not find full satisfaction in the object, but, in the very act of knowing it, is already striving past it.

Striving past it towards what final end? Where will my inquiring intellect find full satisfaction and complete rest? Not in the next object, nor in the one following, nor in any of the objects which it might eventually know. No object which I might possibly represent before my mind will fully satisfy it. No object, no collection of objects, be it ever so extensive, will satiate the yearning of my intelligence. Even should the universe be infinite in space and unending in time, it could not serve as an object which would exhaust my intellectual appetite. For I would at once realize that even if unlimited in space and time, it is limited in being, in perfection. It is not self-explaining; I would ask questions about it; my intellectual dynamism would sweep beyond it.

Every time our intelligence knows an object, it knows that object as limited. But in order to know a limit as limit, one must already stand beyond that limit, either in fact or at least in striving.[11] And since every real or conceivable object of

[11] I beg the reader to excuse me for repeating that statement so often. As a matter of fact, throughout this whole vindication, I am repeating the same thing time and time again. My excuse is that this matter is too simple and evident for explanation. I hope that, somewhere along the line, the student will "catch sight" of what I am trying to show.

our intelligence is immediately known as limited, that intelligence keeps striving towards some reality which is not really an object for it but is its ultimate end—the Unlimited, the All-Perfect, the Infinite. Every object which our intelligence knows is only a step in that direction, a means towards that ultimate end.

We may show this in another way. The only object which my intelligence cannot know, the only limit which can be set to its drive for knowledge, is non-being. Absolutely everything but non-being is grist for its mill. But that amounts to saying that there is no limit to the appetite of my intelligence. The end towards which it keeps striving in every act of knowledge is a reality without any limit, the infinite itself.

Another way: Of everything which my intellect knows it affirms that "it is." But it so happens that in every one of these affirmations the predicate *is,* is too wide for the subject. My intellect never meets any object about which it can say simply that "it is"; every object is *this* or *that;* we cannot simply say that "it *is*." What my intellect keeps striving for is some reality about which it can affirm, without any restriction, that "it *is*." But only with regard to the being whose essence is to exist can it be said, simply and exhaustively, that "it *is*." All other, partial affirmations are but anticipations of that final affirmation in which our intellect will finally meet a reality which exhausts its total capacity for affirmation.[12]

[12] Gabriel Marcel, who is wary of the traditional demonstrations of God's existence as usually presented, seems to have had the present one in mind when he noted, at the beginning of his philosophical career, that every act of knowledge amounts to the awareness of some discordance, of "an inadequation between the act of affirming on the one hand (which is the very expression of the infinite considered positively) and the thing affirmed on the other hand, which is itself only through excluding other things, *which therefore does not coincide with the act which posits it.* To the extent in which this disharmony

6. *Therefore every known object is implicitly referred to the unlimited being.*

This follows logically from the previous statements. Now we see how the principle of metaphysical causality is being exercised in every one of our acts of knowledge. If I know every object only as a step towards the unlimited being, as an intermediate end on my way to the ultimate end, the infinite being, I affirm implicitly, by the very act of knowing it, that it depends on that infinite being as an intermediate end depends on the ultimate end. In other words, in every act of knowledge I *exercise* the following affirmation: "This object depends on the unlimited being." From this derives at once the following principle: "Whatever can be known depends on the unlimited being," which is one formulation of the principle of causality.

In other words, we can affirm of every thing we know that it *is,* because, by the very dynamism of our intellect, we add to the subject of our affirmation a "complement of intelligibility" which equates that subject with the unlimited predicate *is.* That complement of intelligibility is the principle of metaphysical causality, exercised by our intellect as it refers every object it knows to its unlimited end.

If, therefore, anybody should deny the principle of causality, since he would thereby be performing an act of knowledge, he would implicitly affirm what he is explicitly denying. There would be a contradiction not in what he says, but between what he says and the very activity by means of which he says

---

is manifested . . . the finite is seen as transcending itself. . . . Hence the complementation of the finite looks like the effort through which the spirit endeavors to approximate the coincidence of the affirmation and of that which is affirmed." *Journal Métaphysique,* p. 93. Quoted by Roger Troisfontaines, *De l'Existence à l'Etre* (Paris: Vrin, 1953), Vol. II, p. 213. (My italics.)

it. If I drive across Maryland on my way from New York to Washington, I could say without explicit contradiction, while driving through the Old Line State, "The road from New York to Washington does not cross Maryland." But there would be a contradiction between what I say and what I do, namely driving to Washington from New York over Maryland.

In this way it can be demonstrated that whenever man knows some object, he affirms implicitly, by the very movement of his intellect, that this object depends on the unlimited being. Thus we have vindicated the value of the principle of metaphysical causality—or, at least, indicated the general direction in which such a vindication is possible. Since we do not have the intuitive intellectual knowledge of pure spirits, the only manner in which we can justify or vindicate first principles is by showing that we cannot not affirm them, that their denial involves a contradiction. This we have done.

I am afraid that many a good student, after careful study of the preceding, might, instead of being convinced, be bewildered, confused—wary if not downright sceptical. May I point out once more to my intelligent reader how difficult, how well-nigh impossible, was my task? Let him try to convey to somebody who feels nothing for Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* why they are so exquisitely beautiful. Or, supposing that he is a good swimmer, let him try to describe in detail every movement he makes while he is swimming at full speed!

It is to be hoped, therefore, that the student will not at once shrug off this attempt at vindication. Let him, rather than concentrating on the poverty of the words, descend into himself and try to become aware of the mighty sweep of his own intellect, which I have tried to express in concepts. He might

thus become aware that my words represent a momentous reality deep within himself. If the student does not grasp that intuition of his own intellectual dynamism, all words are useless; once he has caught a glimpse of it, they become superfluous. It is not difficult to see what one has; it is incomparably more difficult to see what one is. Man does not have, he is an insatiable yearning for, being; and in that sense he is a living affirmation of the existence of Being.

Many objections can be leveled against this vindication, and we shall now consider some of them.

SOME OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE VINDICATION

1. Does the fact that my intellect strives towards an unlimited being imply that such a being exists? People seek and work for things which do not exist and which their exertions are incapable of bringing into existence.

—Before answering that objection, we must recall an important point. The striving of the intellect is not an elicited but a natural striving—that is, man's intellectual striving is not directed by some previous knowledge; it is not free; it is an expression of the intellect's intimate nature.

In his elicited and free volitions, man may put before himself goals which do not exist, which may never exist. If man's intellect were striving towards a previously known, consciously desired unlimited being, such an appetite would indeed not necessarily imply the existence of that being. But the fact that our intellect strives naturally and necessarily towards the un-

limited being implies the existence of that being. We try to prove this as follows:

Nature cannot strive towards the impossible. Striving towards the impossible means striving towards that which is not, towards nothing. It is not striving at all. One who looks for a square circle is looking for nothing. Since my intellect strives towards the unlimited being, that being must be possible. The possibility of the unlimited being is a condition of the possibility of the movement of my intellect. Since my intellect undeniably moves on and on, the unlimited being is possible. But the unlimited being is possible if and only if that being exists. Therefore that being exists.

Professor Isaye demonstrates this point in another way.[13] The statement "The unlimited being does not exist" is contradictory. This is obvious as soon as we realize that the unlimited being must possess all perfections, including, of course, existence itself. From this the ontological argument concluded to the existence of God. But this does not follow at once. For the contradiction, which is undeniably contained in the above judgment, may be of a double kind. It may reside in the subject of the judgment, or it may reside in the judgment itself (a contradiction between subject and predicate). If the contradiction is contained in the subject of the statement, then that statement is true: the unlimited being cannot and does not exist.

However, we have shown that the subject of the statement, the unlimited being, is not contradictory. We have done this, not as the proponents of the ontological argument do, by a mere examination of the concept of *unlimited being,* but by

[13] "La finalité de l'intelligence . . .," pp. 67, 91.

showing that the human intellect strives necessarily towards the unlimited being.

To strive towards the contradictory is contradictory, is therefore impossible. Hence the undeniable *fact* that the human intellect strives towards the unlimited being demonstrates that the unlimited being is not contradictory.

Thus it has been shown that the subject of the statement "The unlimited being does not exist" is not contradictory. And we may rightly conclude that the contradiction resides in the statement itself, that it is contradictory to assert that the unlimited being does not exist. Hence the unlimited being exists.

2. Your proof is based on a vicious circle. Your affirmation of God's existence starts from the principle that "nature cannot strive towards the impossible." You take for granted the old Scholastic axiom that "a natural desire cannot be frustrated" (*Desiderium naturae non potest esse inane*). But this supposes that nature is the product of an intelligent and wise cause, which can be none other than God. This is an obvious case of begging the question.

—If we really based our demonstration on the axiom "a natural desire cannot be frustrated," we would indeed be begging the question. For there seems to be no other assignable reason for admitting that axiom than that the almighty and allwise author of nature would not put in nature a desire which cannot or never will be satisfied.

But our demonstration is not based on that axiom. It is based on the evident principle that "nature cannot strive towards the impossible." This principle does not presuppose God's existence, and it is easy to demonstrate. For to strive towards the impossible or towards the contradictory is the same as to strive towards that which is not and cannot be.

It is tantamount to drawing a square circle or seeing what is not there. A natural striving towards the impossible or the contradictory is contradictory and impossible. True, men have been known to strive towards the absurd, the impossible and the contradictory—but only by elicited volition, following an erroneous judgment about the possibility of the goal. We are speaking here of a natural desire, not preceded by knowledge, since it is presupposed by every act of knowledge.

3. Even if the demonstration is based upon the impossibility of a natural striving towards the contradictory, it begs the question. Why is it impossible for a natural striving to tend towards the impossible or the contradictory? Because that would be absurd. Hence you suppose that reality is not absurd, that it makes sense. But it makes sense if, and only if, God exists. Therefore you suppose that God exists. Obviously a vicious circle!

—In a certain sense the objection is justified. It is true that reality makes sense if, and only if, God exists. Were this not true, we should be unable to demonstrate his existence. This is a new instance of that "circuminsession" of all metaphysical truths which we mentioned earlier. Nevertheless we can, without begging the question, assume that reality makes sense, because any possible interlocutor grants us that much by agreeing to enter a discussion with us. The whole point of our demonstration is precisely to show him that this, his first admission, implies the admission of God's existence. Should he thereupon withdraw that first admission, deny that reality makes sense, he would be saying that reality is absurd. But if reality is absurd, everything is absurd, including the statement "Everything is absurd." We have plunged into a contradiction. We can *say* that everything is absurd; we cannot

really *think* or *affirm* it. By the very act of using our intellect, we assert implicitly that things make sense. We show this by showing that the denial of this assertion implies a contradiction. But to assert implicitly that things make sense is to assert implicitly that God exists. The demonstration of God's existence consists precisely in showing that the former assertion implies the latter. The objection has allowed us to show once more that, unlike a scientific discovery, the demonstration of God's existence is not the discovery of some new state of affairs, but only the explicitation of the implicit.

4. Knowing is not striving, it is not a movement but a contemplative rest. Striving belongs to the domain of the appetite, from which the domain of knowledge is really distinct. Your demonstration smacks of voluntarism.

—This objection gives us the opportunity to clarify some important points in our approach:

a. Every faculty has a nature, and to every nature corresponds some appetite, some striving towards that nature's own perfection. It is true that all *elicited* immaterial appetite should be restricted to the will. But not so for natural appetite. Truth is the good of the intellect, and the intellect wants it and strives for it.[14]

b. It would be more precise to deny that there is any striving—either of the intellect or of the will. What strives is man himself, and he does it in an elicited way by means of his will, in a natural way by means of all his faculties, the intellect not excluded.

c. The ultimate stage in the act of intellectual knowledge is indeed a state of quiet contemplation of the known object.

[14] *S. Theol.*, I, 82, 3, ad 1.

But that ultimate stage is preceded by a number of preconscious activities which render the form of the object immanent in the faculty, while keeping it opposed to it. These activities include a real natural striving.

d. The distinction between intellect and will is well established and must be maintained. It could be argued, however, that the most fundamental activities of man originate on a level so deep as to be prior to such a distinction, so that it can really be attributed to man's whole spirit, intellect and will combined. The fundamental movement of the intellect is an activity emerging from such a level, and both his appetite and his knowledge are involved in it.[15]

This explains why it is so difficult to put this activity into concepts and words. When we speak of it, as we have been doing, it sounds artificial and unreal. Most of us are intellectually convinced of the existence of God. But when we try to translate that intellectual conviction into clear language, we meet real difficulties. We must continually refer to the underlying intuition if we want to be certain of what we say.

We understand also why the study of this basic activity, which is so totally human, is strongly influenced by man's total personality. Intellectual matters which are objects of disinterested speculation can be studied and understood by an acute intellect uninfluenced by moral dispositions. Not so the problem at hand, whose elucidation depends not only on how we think, but also on what we love, how we live, what we are. Demonstrating God's existence involves a vital option.

5. What you say of human intelligence may be said of every faculty, not only in man but also in animals. Our eyes want to see, they are never satisfied by what they see, they

[15] *S. Theol.*, 1, 82, 4, ad 1; 59 1, C.

want to see always more. The same applies to animals. Hence you should claim that the eyes "exercise" the principle of causality, that there must exist an Unlimited Visible, and that all animals implicitly affirm the existence of God!

—We admit that there is some natural striving in the eyes, which makes them want to see things—or rather, that I have a desire to see things with my eyes. But the eyes are not aware that what they see is limited. They do not, in the very act of seeing an object, already strive beyond it, they are not always "already beyond" their object, as our intellect constantly is. Man, of course, may know and does know that whatever he sees is limited, but he knows that not by means of his eyes but through his intellect. There is no reason for admitting that animals are aware of the limitation and finiteness of the objects which they see.

The objection might have been presented in a more drastic way. Our stomach wants food; then, having digested it, it wants more food, and so ever on. Should we not conclude, then, from this real appetite to the existence of some Infinite Edible? Here again is missing that all-important element of our previous demonstration, the awareness of whatever is apprehended in the very act of apprehension.

6. It may be true that we are aware, or may become aware, of the limitation of every object we know. But this is not to be explained by any striving "beyond" such objects. It is explained much more simply by the very multiplicity of the objects of our knowledge. If I know only one object, I may not be aware of its limitation. But as soon as I know one more, I realize that both the first and the second object are limited. No need for a mysterious intellectual dynamism in order to explain this obvious fact.

—The multiplicity of the objects of my knowledge *confirms* the fact of their limitation. But it is not the only or the basic reason for my awareness of their limitation. I may conceive of the *totality* of the universe, and as soon as I have formed this conception I am aware that the object corresponding to it is finite, limited—not necessarily in space or time, but at least in ontological perfection, in consciousness, freedom and love. My intellect is "already beyond" this object which, by its very definition, cannot be multiplied and is unique. I may multiply it in my mind, but this shows precisely that my mind is "already beyond" it, and will stop only when it reaches the absolutely unlimited being.

This becomes even more evident when we replace the spatial term "limited" by the noetic term "not self-explaining." The reason why our intellect is never satisfied by any object it knows is that no object explains itself, my intellect continues asking questions about it. This lack of self-explanation is at once evident to my mind as a result not of the multiplicity of the objects, but of the movement of my intellect, which urges me on to look for further explanations of whatever I know.[16]

7. It may be true that man is urged on by his intellect to look for further explanations of whatever he knows. But this movement does not bring the intellect to a first being, but goes on indefinitely. To claim that it leads to an infinite being is to claim that science, which is precisely the product of man's attempt to explain everything, ultimately leads to God. A scientist who would explain the facts by appealing to God would no longer be a scientist.

[16] For a further, more technical, refutation of this objection, see Isaye, "La finalité de l'intelligence . . . ," pp. 84–86.

—There is a double explanation of everything we know. We want to find out how things *came about* and how things *are*. The first question refers to the *origin*, the second to the *existence* of things. Science tries to answer the first question by discovering the antecedents of phenomena and the antecedents of these antecedents, and so on. It endeavors also to discover the laws which rule the connections of these antecedents and their consequents. Metaphysics, on the other hand, is interested in the second question. It inquires about the very existence of things, and looks not for their antecedents but for their causes.

Science never discovers a first origin of things, it sets up an unending series of antecedents, its quest goes on indefinitely. That is precisely why it does not totally satisfy the human intellect, which, while definitely interested in explaining the phenomenal origin of things, demands at the same time an explanation of their present being or existence.

It is true that scientific training, which is so widespread and so highly honored nowadays (and rightly so), makes many intelligent people unconscious of the deeper metaphysical yearning of their own intellect. They have trained their minds so long in looking only for antecedents that they do not notice that this intellect of theirs, while apparently satisfied with unending chains of antecedents and consequents, continues to "transcend" every object they know, is always "already beyond" it, referring it thus, by this very movement, to its total explanation and ultimate end. In other words, the metaphysical explanation is being "lived" even before the scientist starts his scientific explanation. Scientists affirm (at least implicitly) the existence of the objects which they study; in this prescientific and unavoidable affirmation they implicitly

affirm the principle of metaphysical causality as the ontological explanation of reality.

To make that important point clearer, we may briefly and simply explain here the relation which exists between metaphysical and scientific (or everyday) knowledge. Man is a being composed of soul and body. But as a being is, so it acts. Hence, as a being is, so it knows. Hence there exists in human knowledge something which corresponds to the soul and something which corresponds to the body. The soul of human knowledge is metaphysics, its body is either everyday or scientific knowledge. Neither metaphysics nor scientific (or everyday) knowledge can ever be given alone, any more than, during this life, soul or body can exist without its ontological partner. Although metaphysical knowledge requires scientific or everyday knowledge, it does not intrinsically depend on it, any more than the human soul depends intrinsically on the body. Scientific knowledge is at all times animated, informed, "besouled" by metaphysical knowledge, just as the body is kept alive by the soul. Since the principle of causality is one of the main items in our metaphysical knowledge, all scientific knowledge, even when it spins out its unending series of antecedents and consequents, implicitly affirms the dependence of the objects it investigates upon the Pure Act.

8. You have demonstrated that every object we know is referred by our intellect to the Infinite Being. But you have not demonstrated that every object which exists is caused by the Infinite Being. You have given no proof of the principle of causality.

—We have demonstrated that God is the principle of intelligibility of all beings which we know. But the intelligible and the real are convertible. That which is intelligible is real, and

that which is real is intelligible. Therefore the cause of all intelligibility is also the cause of all reality.

In other words: that which makes the objects attractive to my intellect is their truth. But truth and being are convertible. Hence that which attracts my intellect in the objects is their being. My intellectual dynamism refers the truth of its objects to its ultimate end, which is the Unlimited Being. Therefore it refers the being of these objects to that same ultimate end. It affirms that in their existence the beings which it knows depend on the Infinite Being. It "exercises" or "lives" the principle of metaphysical causality, even before consciously stating it.[17]

But does the fact that the very being of all objects known is referred to the Infinite Being imply that these objects depend in their very existence on the Infinite Being? The painter refers the paintbrush he uses to his picture as a means to an end, yet the brush is not ontologically dependent on the picture.

This is true because the relation of the brush to the painting is only that of a tool to an artefact. But in real ontological movement, in a real passage from potency to act, every immediate actuation is such only as an incomplete participation in the fullness of the final act. The dynamism of our intellect is such a real ontological movement. Rather than to compare every affirmation with the painter's brush we should compare it with the lines he draws, which exist as meaningful lines only in and through the finished picture. Of course, like every comparison, this one should not be pushed too far. We do not claim that God is composed of the beings which we affirm, but only that these beings derive their existence and their in-

[17] Cf. Isaye, "La finalité de l'intelligence . . . ," pp. 74–75.

telligibility from him, and that through its very dynamism our intellect affirms this of the objects which it knows.

When the objection goes on to say that we "have not demonstrated that every object which exists is caused by the Infinite Being," it is quite right. This can be demonstrated only by applying the principle of metaphysical causality to these objects. The purpose of our vindication is not to prove that every finite being depends on God for its being, but to show that the principle of causality, which allows us to prove such a statement, cannot be rejected without implicit contradiction.

Therefore, should someone claim that we cannot bypass the intrinsic examination of the intelligibility of finite reality *in its own being* if we want to reach the Infinite Being as the universal cause of all beings, we agree with him. But he will reach God in this way only by using the principle of causality. If he wants to answer the serious objections of modern philosophy against the validity of that principle, he may find it useful to employ the method which we suggest.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

1. The vindication presented above resembles that suggested by Maritain.[18] He speaks of an "intuition of existence," where we prefer to speak of an "intuition of our affirmation of existence." He seems to hold that we have a direct intuition of existence, while we hold that this intuition is only indirect. Intellectual dynamism, of which we are directly aware in a real intuition, is the awareness of our progressive affirmation of existence.

[18] See, for instance, in his *Approaches to God,* pp. 3 ff.

But we have no direct intuition of existence. Such an intuition would have to be an intellectual act, since sense knowledge reaches being or existence materially, not formally. But on the intellectual level our direct knowledge is only of the whatness of material beings, which we know through concepts and judgments, hence not intuitively. We know immaterial realities only indirectly, by analogy—hence not intuitively. I have a sense intuition of my own body, but no intellectual intuition of my soul. The only intellectual intuition which man possesses is that of his own spiritual activities, his knowing and his willing. We have been using that intuition in our vindication. Whenever I know an object, I am intuitively aware of knowing that object, of affirming its existence. In that sense we have an intuition of existence.

2. Wittgenstein seems to have thought of something similar to our vindication, when he wrote the cryptic statement "not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is." And again, "The contemplation of the world *sub specie aeterni* is its contemplation as a—limited—whole. The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling."[19]

[19] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* 6.44; 6.45. With Charlesworth we supply the dashes in "a—limited—whole," which have been omitted in the English translation. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), an Austrian by birth, taught philosophy at Cambridge University. He has been one of the most influential thinkers of present-day England. Often (but wrongly) considered a member of the school of Logical Positivism, he was rather one of the founders of the Philosophy of Analysis. He was an attractive personality though in a sense an enigma: he seems to have been torn between a great desire to make philosophy scientifically clear and precise and a keen awareness that the basic realities of life could not be presented in clear and precise scientific language. For a good introduction into his thought, see the book mentioned in note 20.

To investigate *how* the world is, is the task of the sciences. But when we consider the fact *that* it is, we entertain the thought that possibly the world might *not* be. But such an idea shows that our mind is not imprisoned in the world—that is, in the totality of finite realities. It makes it evident that although we are in a sense only a small part of the world, in another sense we are above and beyond it, past all finite reality.

That is even more clearly expressed in Wittgenstein's second statement, with regard to the world as a limited whole:

> . . . in relation to propositions which claim to express something about "the world," that is "everything that is the case" or "the totality of facts"; in other words, *metaphysical* propositions. Such propositions are also meaningless because in order to think of "the world" I have to think of it as, in some sense, a limited whole; but this would be to try to "think both sides of the limit," which is senseless. To think of "the totality of facts," or the "community of being," as the scholastics say, is to try to think of a totality which is opposed to or limited by, nothing, and this is precisely not to be limited, or, in other words, not to be a "totality." . . . And yet, what we *mean* by saying that the world is and that the world is the totality of facts is, . . . correct, only it cannot be thought or expressed or said.[20]

We agree with all this, except where Wittgenstein claims that these propositions are meaningless. They are such from the scientific point of view, they are such for the positivist, whose philosophy does not transcend that point of view. We can even go further. Our ordinary concepts are no longer sufficient

[20] Maxwell J. Charlesworth, *Philosophy and Linguistic Analysis* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1959), p. 87.

for this kind of knowledge. We must learn to look right through and beyond what they *represent* (always a finite and material thing) to what they *mean* or *intend*. This again Wittgenstein seems to have felt when he wrote, "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself. It is the mystical."[21] We have no adequate concept of God, he is in that sense inexpressible. Yet *he shows himself* as that towards which we are irresistibly drawn by the very movement of our intellect. We do not follow Wittgenstein where he calls these realities inexpressible and talking about them meaningless. Since he mentions them, they are not quite inexpressible, and what he says about them is far from meaningless. What cannot be expressed in ordinary univocal concepts may be to some extent said in analogical concepts, which are meaningless only for a positivist.

3. In his remarkable work *Geist in Welt* Karl Rahner has shown, in another way, that it is only because our intellect strives towards the infinite that we can think at all. Thinking supposes abstraction, by which the agent intellect abstracts the universal idea from the sense image. This abstraction is often conceived in a rather naive way, as if the idea were contained in the sense image and could be discovered by simply removing its sense wrapping. Rahner shows that abstraction is possible only because the human intellect "transcends" in the direction of the unlimited being the form which it derives from matter.

The forms are given in our everyday experience embedded in matter, therefore individualized and singular. Yet our intellect knows them as universal, as applicable to an indefinite number of individual cases. This, says Rahner, is possible only

[21] Wittgenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 522.

if, even before the act of abstraction, the agent intellect, by itself, encompasses the whole field of these possibilities, and is thus aware that the concreteness of the sense-given form is a limitation of these possibilities, whereby it gets to know the form itself as multipliable in that field. This transcending awareness of the further possibilities, whereby the form given concretely in sense knowledge is known as limited and thus abstracted, we call "*Vorgriff*" (transcending anticipation).[22]

Rahner shows that this *Vorgriff* extends beyond all space and time. It does not aim at an object of knowledge, since it is presupposed by every object of knowledge:

It is the movement of the spirit towards the totality of its possible objects, for only thus can the limitation of the single objects of knowledge be experienced. This totality, as final aim of the *Vorgriff,* cannot be the sum total, but is the original unity of all possible objects.[23]

The scope of that *Vorgriff* is as wide as that of being:

An absolute being would completely fill this width of the *Vorgriff*. Therefore such a being is co-affirmed as real (since it cannot be grasped as merely possible). In that sense, but only in that sense, one can say that the *Vorgriff* goes towards God. Not as if it went immediately towards the absolute Being, in order to represent it as some object in its own self, but because the reality of

[22] *Geist in Welt,* p. 153. "Transcending anticipation" is a rather clumsy English rendering of the short German term "*Vorgriff.*" But that word is well-nigh untranslatable. It corresponds to the "*excessus*" of Aquinas, to what French authors call "*dépassement*" (cfr. Fontan and Delanglade), and to what we call the dynamism of our intellect.

[23] *Ibid.,* p. 155.

God as that of the *esse absolutum* is implicitly co-affirmed by the width of the *Vorgriff*, by the *esse commune*.[24]

Rahner further points out that the way in which we are aware of God as co-affirmed in every one of our affirmations is a very special one. In the case of this "*transzendentalen Empirie des Absoluten*" we have a "non-objective, non-thematic consciousness, which, by itself, cannot be raised to reflective-available knowledge."[25]

So it is not surprising that some very intelligent people can sincerely claim that they are not aware of this co-affirmation of God in their every affirmation. This will be all the more likely if they have fallen under the spell of the precision and clearness of logico-mathematical analysis. The methods of analysis are very useful in the investigation of material objects and of everyday or scientific knowledge. But the dynamism of our intellect is not a material object, it is not an object but the very soul of our everyday and of our scientific knowledge; it is not something which we have but something which we are. In our deepest inner spiritual self we are an affirmation of God. That something in us which is always affirming, or at least co-affirming, God is known technically as the "agent intellect." Rahner calls the agent intellect "the power of the transcending anticipation of being as such" ("*das Vermögen des Vorgriffs auf das esse schlechthin*"). We might also call it the principle of causality in act or in exercise.

4. Maréchal[26] has demonstrated that only the dynamism

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[26] See his "Le Dynamisme intellectuel," *Revue néoscolastique de Philosophie*, 28 (1927), pp. 137–165. Reprinted in *Mélanges Maréchal*, Vol. I, pp. 75–101.

of our intellect can explain why our knowledge is objective. Two features of our intellectual knowledge demand an explanation, its *immanence* and its *objectivity*. What we know must enter into us and, to some extent, become us (immanence). That aspect of human cognition has been extensively studied in Thomistic philosophy. But although the things we know are in us and, in a certain sense, have become us, we know them nevertheless as distinct from us, as not-us, as objects. Many students fail to see any problem here. They believe that, since the objects affect us from outside, they are, as a matter of course, known as being outside, distinct from us, not-us. But things are not as simple as that! Animals too are affected from without by the things they perceive; yet they do not know them as objects. We have many good reasons for concluding that they know the things of their environment as *spatially* distinct from themselves but not as *entitatively* distinct. They do not know these objects as distinct from themselves because they do not know themselves. Animals, as Max Scheler once wrote, live ecstatically in their environment; that explains their marvelous instincts, but also their lack of language. Hence it is evident that external receptivity is not a sufficient explanation for objectivity. The problem remains: how can I know as not-I, as an object entitatively distinct from me, that which I know only because its form has become immanent in me, is now in some sense my own form? There are only two ways in which an immanent form can be productive of *objective* knowledge. Either that form is an exemplary form, the model for something which the knower is to produce —which is generally not the case with man—or that form is in us not statically, like paint on a wall, but dynamically, like water on the bow of a speeding ship. We are aware of the

form as the form of another, because we strive towards that form before we have it; when we have it, we continue to desire it, and after having acquired it, we strive past it, beyond it, in our quest for the unlimited being. Of all this our spiritual activity is, at least vaguely, aware.

Hence it is the dynamism of his intellect which opens up for man the vast expanses of the spirit. Animals have an environment; they have no world. As the Germans put it, they have an *Umwelt,* no *Welt*. They are imprisoned in a small segment of reality, with the redeeming feature of being marvelously attuned to it. Man is open to the world, to the universe, to everything, because he is open to the Unlimited. This is the "*panta pôs*" of Aristotle, the "*quo est omnia facere*" of Aquinas. Man, although in space and time, is not a prisoner of them; he is aware of them and thus transcends them. Man, although attracted by many goods, is not forced to choose any, because he knows the Infinite Good. He is free because he is attuned to the fullness of being.

5. Defever points out another important aspect of our knowledge of God:

> It is because we know implicitly what God is, that we know what things are, and not the other way around. To be sure, the proper determinations of things come from the things themselves, through the sense experience we have of them. But that precisely these determinations are the determinations of the *being* of things, that these things are *intelligible* and *existing* according to the quiddity, this we would not be able to know if we did not know implicitly what God is, that he is unlimited being and intelligibility. In order for the quiddity to become intelligible in act, the intelligence must free it from matter; in order to free it from matter,

intelligence must assume it in its movement towards the ultimate end, which is the intelligibility and the existence of Being itself.[27]

Empiricists of various kinds—not only those whose thought issues quite logically in phenomenism and agnosticism but also those who, in spite of their starting point, end up somehow in solid but dogmatic metaphysical knowledge[28]—believe that we acquire our knowledge of being from sense experience. But being has neither color, nor sound, nor taste, nor smell; it cannot be perceived by the senses. Undeniably sense experience contributes to our knowledge of it, and not simply as an occasion. It is, as St. Thomas says, the "matter of the cause" of our cognition of being;[29] the "form of the cause" of that same cognition is our intellect itself, in its unending quest of the infinite.

All this makes it evident that the demonstration of God's existence proceeds in a way which is quite different from that of most other demonstrations. It does not discover something previously unknown, but it makes explicit that which was given only implicitly. No new knowledge is acquired, but greater awareness prevails of what was known all along. The objection is sometimes made: How can we pass from the finite and the relative to the infinite and the absolute? If the starting point of a demonstration is finite and relative, its conclusion can never get beyond these limitations.

[27] *La Preuve réelle de Dieu,* p. 78.

[28] They might be called "dogmatic empiricists." See my article "A Thomistic Misapprehension?" in *Thought,* 32 (1957), pp. 189-198.

[29] *S. Theol.,* I, 84, C. "The phantasms are in potency to something which the intellective soul has in act—that is, being, abstracted from material conditions. And in that respect, the intellective soul stands to them as act to potency" (*Comp. theol.,* I, ch. 88).

The fact is that we do not start from the finite and the relative but are from the beginning in touch with the infinite and the absolute. The conclusion is not wider than the premises, the premises are as wide as the conclusion. The proof of God's existence consists in making ourselves aware that our intellect never affirms anything without co-affirming the Pure Act. When we start the demonstration, we note the fact that we are affirming some finite object. But this affirmation is "besouled" by the affirmation of God, and the proof consists merely in making this explicit and evident.

3

Return to the Traditional Proofs

THE FIRST WAY

When considering the first way of St. Thomas, we left a few problems in abeyance. We can come back to them now.

1. *Whatever is moved is moved by another.*

This is one of the possible formulations of the principle of causality, whose value we have vindicated. Whatever is moved is in potency, is limited, depends therefore on that which is not moved, which is not limited, on the unlimited being, on the Pure Act.

Starting the demonstration of God's existence with such a universal major, as we did in our polysyllogism, can easily be misleading. It seems to imply that God's existence is one specific application of this principle. It seems to imply that somehow we know this universal principle before knowing of God. What we have said of the principle of causality should have made it abundantly clear that this is not the case. The demonstration of the major coincides with the demonstration of God's existence. God's causality is not a specific instance

of causality. It is the all-pervading causality, of which all other instances are only specifications.

2. *But some things are moved.*

This is the undeniable fact of experience from which we start. As explained previously, we do not pass from this fact to a discovery of God; in the affirmation of this necessary fact, the existence of God is at once co-affirmed.

3. *It is impossible to go on indefinitely from one moved mover to another moved mover.*

This question of a possible infinite regression should not even come up. Notice how, in 1 above, we formulated the principle, "Whatever is moved is moved by another" as "Whatever is limited depends on the unlimited being." There are no intermediaries, there is no chain of linked causalities, but there is an implicit referring of every finite reality directly to the infinite being. To introduce intermediate causes is to invite the modern mind to slip into the familiar scientific groove from which there is no reaching God. It amounts to suggesting that God is the first link of the chain. But the first link of a chain is a part of that chain. God is no part of the chain of causality. He is the universal cause, operating in every finite causality.

4. *The unmoved mover is God.*

That statement is immediately evident after our vindication of the principle of causality. The unmoved mover is the unlimited being, the Pure Act, God. When we rejected the possibility of an infinite regression, we equivalently rejected the possibility of an unmoved mover who is not God.

It should be evident by now that throughout our polysyllogism there is no real progression. We say as much in the initial major as in the final conclusion. However, what was

stated only implicitly in the former is made explicit in the latter.

Our polysyllogism could be put more simply as follows:

> Whatever is not the unlimited being depends on the unlimited being.
>
> But that which is moved is not the unlimited being.
>
> Therefore that which is moved depends on the unlimited being.

It is not necessary to go over the four other proofs of St. Thomas. The student himself can easily complete them along the lines suggested in our vindication of the principle of causality. It will be enough to consider two special objections made against the third way, the proof from contingency.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE ARGUMENT FROM CONTINGENCY

1. Kant claims that this argument ends by surreptitiously using the ontological proof. It leads up to the existence of a necessary being. The passage from this necessary being to the infinitely perfect being would, according to him, be possible only via the ontological argument. For when we state that the necessary being is the infinitely perfect being, we state equivalently that the infinitely perfect being is necessary (these two propositions happen to be convertible), and this is precisely the gist of the ontological proof.

—Kant overlooks the fact that in our argument we do not proceed from a *concept* of the infinitely perfect being to an affirmation of its existence, as is done in the ontological dem-

onstration. We have demonstrated from *experience* (not from mere concepts) that the absolutely necessary being exists *in reality,* and we show now that the absolute necessity of that being entails its infinite perfection. The fallacy of the ontological argument does not consist in passing via a concept from one conclusion about a really existent being to another conclusion about it (this procedure is logically valid), but in passing via a concept from the realm of ideas to the realm of reality.

Kant might say: I know that you claim to have demonstrated from experience the existence of a necessary being. But even so, it remains true that when you pass, by mere logical analysis, from the necessary to the infinite being, you admit implicitly that the transition is valid also in the other direction, from the infinite to the necessary being. And that is precisely what the ontological argument does. So your demonstration implies that the ontological argument is valid.

To this we may answer, with Gaston Isaye: There is nothing wrong in passing from the hypothesis "infinite" to the hypothesis "necessary" as long as we remember that these are only hypothetical concepts, as long as we do not claim that the corresponding realities exist. On the other hand, the categorical affirmation "The necessary being or the first cause exists" implies the categorical affirmation "The infinite exists."[1]

2. Modern philosophers in English-speaking countries have great difficulties against the existence of a necessary being. "To talk about anything 'existing necessarily' is in their view about as sensible as to talk about round squares."[2] J. N. Findlay says that "necessity in propositions merely reflects our

[1] "La finalité de l'intelligence . . . ," p. 54.

[2] Paul Edwards in *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy,* p. 455.

use of words, the arbitrary conventions of our language. On such a view the Divine Existence could only be a necessary matter if we had made up our minds to speak theistically whatever the empirical circumstances might turn out to be."[3]

These difficulties derive from the analytic philosophy espoused by the authors. Since we cannot here discuss the philosophy of analysis, there is not much hope of answering the objections in a way which would satisfy the objectors. The best we can do is to clarify our position and to contrast it with theirs.

When we say that God is necessary, we mean that he is ontologically necessary, that he exists in a necessary way, that he cannot not exist. We do not say that he is logically necessary, but we claim that it is logically necessary for us to affirm his existence. We know about God's ontological necessity precisely on account of this logical necessity. When we say that the affirmation of God's existence is logically necessary, we mean that we would contradict ourselves if we denied that existence. This contradiction is not explicit, it does not occur between the concepts of our statement; in that sense we are willing to admit that the assertion "God exists" is not logically necessary. The contradiction occurs rather between the content of our affirmation and the very activity by which we assert it.

Against our position the analytical philosophers object that all existential propositions are necessarily contingent, ". . . that is to say, it is never true that we can involve ourselves in a breach of the laws of logic by merely denying of something

[3] "Can God's Existence be Disproved?" in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology,* ed. A. Flew and A. Macintyre (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p. 54.

that it exists."[4] This is acceptable in the sense that by denying of something that it exists we can never be shown to have admitted a contradiction between concepts. But it is false in the sense that there may be a contradiction between our denial of an object and the act by which we deny it. The laws of logic are the laws of *correct thinking*. More important than these and underlying them are the laws of *thinking*. To deny the existence of God contradicts the laws of thinking.

There are three other realities which, although not absolutely necessary like God, are hypothetically necessary. *If* I think and discuss at all, I cannot, without implicit contradiction, deny the existence of myself, of you, and of the world. Such are the only four realities whose existence I cannot deny without contradicting myself. They are: my own reality, the reality of my interlocutor, the reality of the world and the reality of God. The contradiction involved in the denial of these realities is not an explicit contradiction between concepts (in that sense there is no breach of the laws of logic), but an implicit contradiction between the content of my denial and the act by which I deny.

Although we maintain that there are four necessary existential propositions, we do not hold that there are four necessary beings. Neither I nor my interlocutor nor the world is necessary. While we exist, we exist necessarily, and that is the reason why we can be subjects of necessary existential propositions. We are hypothetically necessary. It would be possible for us not to exist. About God, on the other hand, we have demonstrated that he exists necessarily, that he cannot not exist. There is and there can be only one absolutely necessary being, and that being is God.

[4] I. M. Crombie, "Theology and Falsification," *Ibid.*, p. 114.

A FEW OTHER DEMONSTRATIONS OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Beside the five traditional ways, many other arguments have been presented to demonstrate the existence of God. We shall consider only two of them here, which have a real value: the argument derived from the fact of moral obligation and the argument taken from man's striving towards happiness.

We shall finish this section by explaining why scientific arguments cannot lead us to a knowledge of God.

Argument From Moral Obligation

All normal people feel morally obliged to do some things and to omit others. Being obliged means: having to do something freely. It is not an irresistible physical coercion, such as the one which makes us fall when we step off a cliff; it is not a physiological necessity, as is the one which forces us to breathe or to eat. It is a moral influence acting upon our will, making us feel that we must act in such or such a way, without actually forcing us to comply. We may overlook this invitation without any apparent harm, but most people feel, at least temporarily, rather unhappy in doing so.

If a hypercritical opponent denies the existence of such an obligation, we might discuss the matter with him. He will expect us to be courteous in that discussion, not to insult him, not to distort his views, and he himself will feel bound to act likewise with regard to us. Thus he admits practically the existence of moral obligation.[5]

[5] See Gaston Isaye, S.J., "La justification critique par retorsion," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain,* 52 (1954) pp. 229–230.

He may, of course, attempt to interpret that obvious fact in some other way. For instance, he might claim that these are simply conventions, like the rules of a game or the laws of etiquette. In that case, however, he would have to admit that, when parents torture their children or when a government exterminates a disliked minority, mere conventions are breached. It is difficult to see how, in these instances, there is not really a moral obligation—that is, the necessity for some individuals to do or to omit certain things freely.

One way frequently used nowadays for explaining the feeling of moral obligation away is to ascribe it to the influence of the superego. Early parental education automatically impresses upon the very receptive mind of the child a strong feeling that some things should be done and others avoided. From the depths of the unconscious these impressions continue to direct the individual's conduct. No need for any transcendent influences, everything can be explained psychologically.

There are indeed superego influences at work in the minds of children and of most adults. Although they blend very smoothly with the stirrings of moral conscience, they are quite different from the latter. There comes a time in the life of every child when he first understands that some things are not bad because they are forbidden (that is the superego reaction) but forbidden because they are bad. When the child has for the first time that feeling that there is something he "ought to" do or not do, he also gets a first faint but definite glimpse of an absolute order of morality which binds him and his life unconditionally. For children deprived of all religious education this may be the first contact with God, very vaguely but really experienced by their budding moral sense.

One of the most crucial stages of every individual's development occurs during adolescence, when many of the precepts and prohibitions driven into the youngster's mind by his parents during the early years emerge more or less clearly before his consciousness, are critically examined, and are either freely and personally assumed by his conscience or thrown out as childish stuff. True, some of the early impressions may go on unconsciously and without any critical challenge; they constitute what remains of the superego in the adult. But in normal people there now clearly emerges a feeling of moral obligation which, even if they do not always live up to it, they experience as clearly binding upon them. And they are even more clearly aware of such obligation as binding upon the other people around them.

Now, our point is that this necessity which man feels incumbent on his freedom, which does not come from himself, nor from his early education, nor from his environment, but is a constitutive element of his very nature, bespeaks the existence of a supreme lawgiver, who does not himself fall under any obligation but is to himself his own law, who does not receive his nature from another but is his own nature. This is God.

Kant, who found fault with all the traditional arguments purporting to demonstrate God's existence, considered the present proof as perfectly valid. The reason why it is generally not emphasized as much as the other proofs is that it supposes the existence of moral obligation. Moral obligation, so goes the objection, can be proved strictly when we have demonstrated that man has been created by God. But in the present case this would clearly involve a begging of the question. If, however, the existence of moral obligation is demonstrated

from experience, as we have done, the argument is perfectly valid, and it appeals to many people for whom the other demonstrations are too abstruse or too technical.

Argument from Man's Striving towards Happiness

Man wills many things. He has to will many things. He cannot not will. Not to will is but another form of willing. "*Nolo velle*" amounts to "*Volo nolle*."

There is a deep unity in man's volitions. They do not succeed each other haphazardly, like letters in a mailbox. It is the same human nature which produces all these acts of willing by means of that power which we call the will. Whatever man wills is willed by him because it is, in some way or another, good for him, because it helps make him happy.

Man strives towards happiness and tries to reach it by acquiring the many goods which his mind can think of or his senses put before him. These goods are ends for his striving —not the ultimate end, however, but intermediate ends. What is the ultimate end towards which man keeps striving through all these intermediate ends or means?

It is none other than the unlimited good, the perfect good, perfect happiness, which would fully satiate the yearning of his heart. Here again man appears as always "already beyond" any good which he lays hold on, any amount of happiness it may be granted him to enjoy. Of course, he may, and if he is wise he will, train himself to enjoy these scattered goods and these bits of happiness without paying too much attention to their limitations, without always explicitly wanting more

and ever more.[6] But that fundamental yearning remains in him, and it is a decisive proof that what he ultimately wants is the unlimited good and perfect happiness.

In the presence of any good given to him, of any happiness imparted to him, man can think of a greater, more intense, more lasting and more stable good and happiness. And if he can think of it, he also wants it.

It is evident, therefore, that man wants the unlimited good, which alone can make him perfectly happy. His capacity for happiness is infinite, and nothing but the infinite can fill it.

But does the fact that man strives towards the unlimited good imply the real existence of such an unlimited good? Do men not continually yearn for things which do not exist or which will never come to pass?

It is true that they do, and when a man wants something out of elicited appetite—that is, something previously known, which he himself has pictured in his mind—this by no means guarantees the existence of what he thus desires. But things are different when, as in the present case, man wants something out of natural appetite, independently of previous knowledge, unavoidably, just because he happens to be a human being.

It is not contradictory for an elicited appetite to strive towards the impossible or the absurd. But that a natural striving should be directed towards the impossible is a plain contradiction, as we pointed out earlier.

Therefore perfect happiness must be a possibility for man. But it is a possibility for him only if the object whose eventual possession would thus totally beatify him really exists. But this is the unlimited good. Therefore the unlimited good exists.

[6] But that exercise of the virtue of temperance is possible, in its turn, only on account of the striving towards the infinite good.

A few remarks about this proof:

1. It starts from a fact, not from a concept. Man wills something.

2. That fact is necessary, undeniable. Man cannot not will. If he tries not to will, his very trying is an act of the will.

3. The argument is based again upon some kind of intuition, not a sense intuition but an intellectual intuition. Man possesses intuitive knowledge of his own spiritual activities, including his willing.[7]

4. It is not only the act of willing of which we have an intuition, but also the activity of willing "always more," of surpassing what is obtained, of striving "ever beyond." It is our twofold power of thinking and of willing, whereby everything which is grasped by the intellect is known at once as limited, and whatever is secured by the will is exceeded at once by a further desire, that enables man to break out of the finite into the infinite.

5. Why is this demonstration of the striving of the will not emphasized as much as the argument derived from the dynamism of the intellect? Because it shows only that the affirmation of the unlimited good is *practically* necessary, not theoretically or logically necessary. One who denies that he strives for happiness does not contradict himself logically in what he declares: the contradiction exists rather between what he does with his will and what he affirms with his intellect. In the argument from the dynamism of the intellect, the contradiction, although not explicit, occurs in the intellect itself, between its basic movement and one of its individual specifications.

[7] *Ver.*, 22, 12.

6. A serious objection against our argument comes from those who claim that man yearns for indefinitely more goods or happiness, not for the infinite good or for perfect happiness. We have met that objection time and again under the guise of the indefinite regression. It is not easy to answer, because it derives from an anti-philosophical, scientific attitude of mind, which does not look for an exhaustive explanation of the given but is quite willing to postpone the explanation forever. We present God as the answer to a metaphysical question. Such an answer will necessarily be unsatisfactory to one who does not want to ask (at least explicitly) any metaphysical question. With opponents of that kind agreement is possible only when they have become aware of the unsatisfied metaphysical quest which, even in their own minds, underlies their busy scientific probings.

Shall we say, then, that we cannot answer their objection? Not necessarily. It is essential here again to insist that what ultimately explains the unsatisfactoriness of all goods presented to man is their finiteness, the fact that they are limited. The reason the will keeps yearning for more is not that this good is only one in the series and it wants to get to the next one. The reason is that this good is not all the human intellect knows it could be and the human will desires it should be. But if it is really the limitation which keeps the human will on the move, then the ultimate goal of its striving is undeniably the unlimited good itself.

7. It might perhaps be possible to present another, similar argument based on the transcendental of beauty. Most people have had the experience, when really carried out of themselves by some overwhelming impression of beauty, of envisioning in a flash some beauty even more enrapturing, more fully satisfy-

ing, more lasting and durable. Every instance of beauty we enjoy is known by us, in the midst of the present enjoyment, as limited. Our yearning for beauty carries us past it. Who has not, on a glorious summer day, seen those luminous cloud caverns into which the eye can penetrate for a short distance only? But beyond their resplendent portals we suspect others and still others, ever deeper, ever more luminous, and all pointing towards an incandescent climax of light immeasurably far away, unbelievably beautiful in its pure radiation? That is the way man knows God: as the truth which lies beyond every known truth, as the goodness which surpasses all created goodness, as the beauty compared with which all earthly beauty is only a shadow. He knows that truth, that goodness, that beauty, not in itself, but only through and in the very movement which carries his spiritual faculties towards it, always "already beyond" its vestiges on earth.

Can Science Demonstrate God's Existence?

If we take Science in the strict sense, as experimental, quantified, laboratory science, of which physics is the finest example, we must answer that Science cannot demonstrate the existence of God.

Science studies phenomena, things as they appear to our senses. It submits these phenomena to mensuration, experimentation and quantification. Therefore scientific knowledge, as such, although a product of human intelligence, is essentially connected with the imagination and the senses, the

powers of external observation and of material reality. But God cannot be directly observed by the senses, he cannot be experimented upon, and sense observation, experimentation and quantification do not even indirectly lead to him.

Science is concerned with facts, laws, hypotheses and theories. A fact is a connection between phenomena, as expressed in a judgment. God is not a fact. Laws are statements about constant relations between many phenomena. God is not a law.

But could God not be introduced into science as a hypothesis? Not in the strict scientific sense. For from a scientific hypothesis the scientist must be able to deduce certain consequences which can be experimentally verified. Nothing of the kind can be deduced from the existence of God. A scientific theory is a synthesis of many scientific laws and hypotheses. Hence it is evident that God, or an explanation of material phenomena through God, cannot be a scientific theory in the strict sense.

We should, however, remember here what we have said about the relation between scientific and metaphysical knowledge. The latter is to the former as the soul is to the body. That means that, although in his scientific work the scientist has no place for God, the soul of his scientific thinking is metaphysics, by which he affirms not only the ontological reality of the object of his investigations but also its metaphysical dependence on the Infinite Being.

Scientific work is a highly refined technique, and, like all techniques, it is artificial. In his natural attitude man, the scientist included, frequently allows the metaphysical soul of his thinking to become more or less explicit. This leads to the

philosophy of nature, which consists in an interpretation of the data of experience in the light of explicit or implicit metaphysical principles. If we are willing to consider this philosophy of nature as a kind of science, as a science in the wider sense of the word, then science can demonstrate the existence of God.

In other words, the hypothesis of God's existence has some of the features of a scientific hypothesis or theory. It explains many facts and many laws of nature which without it remain forever unexplained. It is, in a certain sense, the best hypothesis, since it explains absolutely all facts and all laws.

Many scientists and philosophers reject such an explanation. They say that an explanation which cannot be checked is not an explanation at all. But many scientific explanations cannot be directly checked either. Nobody has ever seen or photographed an electron or a proton. It is true that the theory of these microphysical particles can be indirectly checked,[8] which is not true for the hypothesis of God.

But, as Isaye points out,[9] the scientist himself continually admits explanations which cannot be checked, directly or indirectly. The scientific paper which he reads consists of a great number of letters, arranged in a certain order. How does he explain that order? Like everybody else he attributes it to the intention of the paper's author. How does he explain that the words of his interlocutor make sense? By the fact that his interlocutor is a conscious and intelligent being. If he denies

[8] If the electron exists with the properties our hypothesis attributes to it, then it follows mathematically that the following phenomena should occur. If I observe these phenomena, the theory is confirmed.

[9] "La métaphysique des simples," pp. 691 ff. What follows is a summary of these pages.

the value of this kind of reasoning, he will express his denial by means of written or spoken words, thus demonstrating that the mind's intention can be expressed by means of sounds or graphic signs, and admitting practically what he denies theoretically.

Therefore the scientist himself feels continually obliged to transcend strictly scientific explanations and to admit hypotheses and theories containing metaphysical implications. He may claim that he never does this as a scientist, he can hardly deny that he does it frequently as a human being. Since life itself forces us thus to admit philosophical explanations, it seems reasonable not to reject the ultimate philosophical explanation, the explanation of all explanations, which is God.

That is what some scientists have been doing in the past, and what some of them are doing again in the present. We can mention E. Whittaker, P. Lecomte du Noüy and P. Teilhard de Chardin.[10] We admit that the works in which these men try to demonstrate the existence of God are not purely scientific, in the strict or narrow sense of that word. They use more or less explicit metaphysical principles to reach God. Yet their systems simply carry through to its ultimate end the search for intelligibility which animates the efforts of scientists as such and which irresistibly pushes the scientist (even the most positivistically-minded scientist) as a human being to transcend the strictly scientific attitude and to admit a metaphysical interpretation of experience, as when he reads a book or talks with a fellow man.

The natural theology contained in the books of the three above-mentioned authors is, to some extent, a restatement

[10] See the titles of their books mentioned on p. 46.

of the "fifth way" of St. Thomas. Like the fifth way it hinges on the principle of causality (as principle of intelligibility), and, should it try to make explicit all its implications, it would have to reason somewhat along the lines which we have followed in our own demonstration.

Answering a Few More Objections

1. Before the advent of Science it was plausible to accept God as the explanation of everything. To continue to do so nowadays is naive. Science explains everything, or will eventually explain everything.

—It is true that there was a time when all events were directly attributed to God. We know now that God acts through secondary causes, and science tells us more and more about their activity. However, to deny all divine causality, if not more naive, is certainly more false than to see that causality directly everywhere. When the positivist sets up his basic principle, "Only that which can be demonstrated scientifically is certain," we have a right to invite him to demonstrate that statement scientifically. He cannot do so. No amount of measurement, of experimentation, of computation will ever demonstrate that statement. Therefore the positivist will either have to enunciate it dogmatically or admit that it is not certain. When it is claimed that "science explains everything," we may ask whether it can explain itself. Science is one of the greatest achievements of the human race, and to lack a great respect for science is certainly not the mark of a real philosopher. But science is a product of man, and like its begetter, it possesses a soul and a body. The soul of science is metaphysics.

That explains why the positivist can only deny the existence of metaphysics by using it.

2. Is the existence of atheism not a strong argument against the existence of God? Nobody in his right mind denies the existence of the sun. If, as suggested above, God is the sun of the intellectual world, how can an intelligent man deny his existence? Yet quite a number of them do.

—The existence of the sun is not evident for blind people, because they lack that sense which tells us most clearly about the sun's presence. Some people lack the sense of metaphysics, without which God's existence is not evident. Or rather, their sense of metaphysics, which is present and implicitly at work in their intellect, without which they would not be human beings, is "repressed" under the influence of positivism, anxiety, pride, or other possible factors.

There seem to be three main reasons why intelligent people profess atheism. The first is a positivistic turn of mind, the second is the existence of evil, the third is the mystery of creation. We have discussed the first in the preceding objection. We shall discuss the second in more detail later in this book. A few words only about it at this point.

Denying God's existence may be a way of explaining evil. But how can it explain the existence of good, of being? We hope to show that our position can, to some extent, explain both good and evil, whereas atheism explains only evil.[11] And even that explanation brings up many problems. This one, for instance: If God does not exist, evil and pain and suffering are senseless, absurd. To say of something that it is absurd implies that it makes no sense and that it should make sense. Why should it make sense?

[11] Cf. Jean Delanglade, *Le Problème de Dieu,* pp. 184 ff.

Some positivists try to explain the positive aspects of reality by chance. But this is not a scientific attitude, since the usual procedure of science (one without which it could not go on) is to admit that where an event shows a probability of only one percent or less of being explainable by chance, that event should not be attributed to chance but to the action of a positive factor.

If the existence of the world can be explained by chance, why could not the bones and artefacts discovered in some caves be explained in the same way? Why can they be adduced as proofs for the existence of prehistoric men? The probability that these finds could be attributed to chance is so slight that scientists do not even consider it. Why, then, not use the same standard in judging the explanation for the existence and the order of the universe?

The third reason for the profession of atheism is explained by De Finance is the following way:

> Either created being is fully real, and then it limits God, and God is no longer God; or God keeps all his prerogatives, and then the created being is no longer anything but a ghost, a phenomenon of the divine consciousness. Granting real being both to things and to God is impossible. God or the world, God or I: there is the radical dilemma, and from this dilemma has derived contemporary atheism under its most virulent form—atheistic humanism.[12]

The same author gives an extensive refutation of that objection, which we paraphrase as follows. The objection derives from a false conception of being. Being is conceived *univocally,* we might almost say quantitatively, "as an all-filling,

[12] *Existence et Liberté,* p. 158. (My translation.)

infinitely dense, infinite sphere, which leaves no place for other beings."[13] It should be conceived *analogously*. Instead of conceiving it as some kind of extensive reality, we should rather conceive it as some kind of intensive reality. Somewhat like a fully saturated color "red." Outside of that fully saturated red an indefinite number of lesser intensities of red may exist, including the various shades of pink. These pinks are real colors; yet, even if they could be added to saturated red, they would add nothing to it. Outside of the all-filling sphere of being (univocal conception) there is no room for any other reality. Outside of the fully saturated red (analogous conception) there is room for plenty of other shades of red.

In other words, all the perfections of creatures are real and are really theirs; yet they all come from God, they are kept in existence by God, they are received from him as a share of his own perfection. This is illustrated by another comparison, often used to answer the following objection against God's infinity: God and the world is more than God alone. But nothing can be more than the infinite. Therefore God is not infinite. We answer by means of this simple comparison: the power of the President of the United States and that of his cabinet is not greater than the power of the President alone. Yet the Secretaries possess real power. But it is delegated power, they hold it entirely from the President. In the same way all the perfections of all creatures, including their very existence, are held by them as derived from God; theirs is a participated existence and perfection.

We admit that, even after these explanations, there remains a certain difficulty in the mind. It is rooted ultimately in the very fact of creation. Creation is a fact, therefore it is possible.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

But it is a very mysterious fact, one which the ancient philosophers were unable even to conceive. If it were not a fact, we would probably deem it impossible. How can there exist something really distinct from the infinite being? How can the infinitely perfect being produce something which is not infinitely perfect? Ultimately the problem of evil, too, is rooted in the mystery of creation.

3. It is a tenet of Thomistic philosophy that in order to know a being, we must receive the form of that being in our intelligence, we must "intentionally" become that being. But God does not have a form by which we can know him, and how could we ever intentionally become God? Therefore it is evident that we cannot know God.

—In order to have a wholly *quidditative* knowledge of God, we should indeed have his form in our intellect. But we have no wholly quidditative knowledge of him, we have no representation of God, we can only signify him; we recognize him by means of a sign, which is the transcending dynamism of our intelligence. In that way there is some kind of identification between God and our intellect.

As Defever puts it:

> . . . There is really a positive and assignable point where the actual identity of the rational knower with the divine known is realized; it is the activity of knowing itself when, in grasping an object, it participates, as its effect, in the divine causality. This is an actual identity of the knowing subject, not, of course, with the supreme Cause, but with the supreme causality, and with that causality not as it surges at its source, but only as it terminates in our own activity. . . . It is with God's activity seen in its effective and real termination that we are in reflective identity. In the sign

constituted by our intelligible and existing affirmation, we see, because we share it,[14] the signified itself, God, and we know therefore the value of the sign.

It is evident that this knowledge, in which we are identified, by sharing it, with God's effect in us, cannot be separated from the knowledge of the representations which it transcends. We must consciously undergo the restricting influence of the latter in order to see our dependence on a transcendent cause which, in itself, escapes our view. Once more the conclusion is evident: *we do not see* what God is in himself . . . yet, from without, starting from the objects and from ourselves, we signify him, and we know what his essence is.[15]

4. Some modern British philosophers claim that God's existence is clearly disproved by the fact that nothing can "falsify" it:

. . . it often seems to people who are not religious as if there was no conceivable event or series of events the occurrence of which would be admitted by sophisticated religious people to be a sufficient reason for conceding, "There wasn't a God after all."[16]

. . . sophisticated religious people . . . tend to refuse to allow, not merely that anything actually does occur, but that anything conceivably could occur, which would count against their theological assertions and explanation. But in so far as they do this their supposed explanations are actually bogus, and their seeming assertions are really vacuous.[17]

[14] The French text says *"participativement,"* which we have translated "because we share it" and "by sharing it."

[15] *La Preuve réelle de Dieu,* p. 84. (My translation.)

[16] Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," in A. Flew and A. Macintyre, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology,* p. 98.

[17] *Ibid.,* p. 106.

What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?[18]

—Let us consider only the existence of God, from which his love follows. What would have to occur which would constitute for me a disproof of his existence? This would have to occur: My intelligence should be capable of looking at reality without being at once aware that it is limited, finite, in need of explanation. I should be capable of standing before the universe and before life without being urged to ask such questions as: What is it all about? What is the meaning of it all? Whence and why the universe? What is the explanation not only of the origin but of the present existence of whatever exists? If all thinking men succeeded, as did the objector, in dulling that insatiable intellectual curiosity to the extent of being satisfied with phenomenal, scientific explanations which tell them not why and how things are, but only how the present state of affairs came about—or, even less than that, by what other state of affairs it was preceded—the demonstration of God's existence would become impossible. In other words: If I were capable of denying God's existence without contradicting myself implicitly, if I could get rid of the soul of my knowledge (metaphysics), while still using its body (everyday and scientific knowledge), something would have occurred which would constitute for me a disproof of the existence of God—or, at least, I would have no more rational grounds for affirming his existence.

5. " 'Every man who exists has a mother,' he [Bertrand Russell] writes in one place. It does not follow from this that 'the human race has a mother'. . . . The question, 'What is the

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

explanation of the Universe?' is in Russell's view as senseless as the question 'Who is the mother of the human race?' "[19]

—This objection, so whimsically put by Russell, typifies the position of many thinkers in the English-speaking world. It is not really an objection, it is a profession of positivism; it is a refusal to admit, besides phenomenal causality, any deeper metaphysical causality. The remark may be translated into philosophical language as follows: "Every event has an antecedent.[20] It does not follow from this that the totality of all events has an antecedent." We admit this without any difficulty. We are not interested in antecedents anyway; antecedents are the business of the scientist, not of the philosopher. We are interested in the cause of the present existence of whatever exists. But when you mention such an interest, you will draw either a blank stare or a pitying smile from the typical positivist. He does not understand what you are talking about. The discussion can lead nowhere, for lack of common ground. Under the influence of Ockham, Hume and Kant the metaphysical sense of many moderns has entirely atrophied, and discussion with them turns into a "double monolog."[21] That is the reason we went to so much trouble in trying to vindicate the principle of metaphysical causality—not in the hope of convincing the confirmed positivist, but rather to satisfy ourselves that because of the dynamism of his intellect even the positivist cannot help asking for "an explanation of the universe" and implicitly affirming the existence of God.

[19] Paul Edwards in *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy,* p. 448.

[20] Our mother is more than an antecedent, she is a cause of our becoming. But for positivists she is only an antecedent.

[21] Cf. for this Gaston Isaye, S.J., "La métaphysique et les sciences," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique,* 83 (1961), pp. 719-751.

6. Your demonstration of God's existence may be all right. But it has nothing in common with the five ways of St. Thomas.

—This is the weakest of all objections, even as, according to St. Thomas, the argument from authority is the weakest of all arguments in philosophy. The only reason we consider it is that our Preface has claimed that the philosophy presented in this book is basically that of Aquinas.

The five ways of St. Thomas are as valid as they were when first presented by him. Our purpose is not to substitute a new demonstration for them. A student who is satisfied with the traditional proofs of Aquinas (well understood, in their full metaphysical scope) shows thereby that he is endowed with a wholesome metaphysical sense, undisturbed by the (ill-founded) doubts and perplexities of so many modern minds. He possesses in these classical demonstrations a solid intellectual basis for his affirmation of God's existence. He does not need this book.

However, should he meet thinkers who challenge the very backbone of all his proofs, the principle of causality itself, then he might perhaps find some help in these pages. The five ways of St. Thomas demonstrate God's existence *a posteriori,* from his effects. They all are based upon the principle of causality. Since, as we have noted, that principle went unchallenged in his time, St. Thomas did not explicitly vindicate it. It has been repeatedly attacked since the thirteenth century. Some of Aquinas's most able followers have taken up that challenge, and the present book is an effort to present, as simply and as clearly as possible, their rebuttal of the many attacks launched against the validity and the scope of the principle of causality.

It is true that the vindication of that principle, as here presented, involves a demonstration of God's existence. But that demonstration is not really a new demonstration, but only an explicitation of what is implicitly contained in each of the five ways.

Our vindication (although such a vindication was never formally attempted by Aquinas himself) sets St. Thomas's ideas and principles to work. Whoever has any doubts about this is invited to study the works of Maréchal, Defever and Rahner mentioned in the notes.

That the central idea of our vindication, that of the dynamism of the intellect, was far from alien to Aquinas is evidenced by the following text:

> Our intellect, furthermore, extends to the infinite in understanding; and a sign of this is that, given any finite quantity,[22] our intellect can think of a greater one. But this ordination of the intellect would be in vain unless an infinite intelligible reality existed. There must, therefore, be some infinite intelligible reality, which must be the greatest of beings. This we call God . . . .[23]

[22] The context shows that "quantity" should be understood here in a wide sense, and might be replaced by "degree of being."

[23] *Summa contra Gentiles,* I, 43, #10.

Part II

THE ESSENCE OF GOD

In our demonstration of God's existence we have already said a few things about his essence. It is impossible to show *that* God is, without explaining to some extent *what* he is. "The nature of God will appear in the very reasons we have for believing in his existence."[1]

We have demonstrated that God is the unlimited being, the ultimate goal of the striving of our intellect and of our will. If God is unlimited, he is pure existence, there is no limiting essence in him. If essence is understood as that principle of being which limits a reality's existence, God can be said to have no essence. If, on the other hand, essence is taken in the sense of that which makes a being what it is, God has an essence. That which makes God what he is, is precisely the unlimited possession of being, his infinite existence. In God existence and essence coincide, God's essence is to exist. Of

[1] Henri Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (New York: Henry Holt, 1935), p. 250.

all other beings we must say that they *have* existence, of God alone we say that he *is* existence. Since being is identically act and perfection, God, as unlimited being, is also unlimited act and unlimited perfection. God is pure act, without any potency; he is infinite perfection, without any imperfection.

4

God in Himself

HOW WE KNOW GOD

The way in which we have demonstrated God's existence made it clear that we can have no adequate concept of him. We know him by striving towards him with our intellect and our will, by pointing towards him; we know him as the reality which lies beyond any reality of which we can have an adequate concept, as infinitely exceeding and transcending the ordinary objects of our knowledge.

All this makes it evident that the way in which we know God is different from the way in which we know finite objects. We know him *positively,* he is the Pure Act, the end of our intellectual dynamism; we know him *negatively,* he is not limited, not finite, not caused. We know him through a *combination of the positive and the negative;* he is beyond anything we can know.

We know God positively by attributing to him some of the perfections we know (being, goodness, intelligence). But the perfections we know are always limited. Our very way of

knowing makes us unable to conceive of an infinite perfection. In our ordinary life, every one of our concepts is related to an image—that is, to a material picture of some object supplied by the senses. This extrinsic dependence on matter renders our knowledge essentially earthbound and unadapted to apprehending adequately the divine reality.

That is why we are unavoidably led to use negative terms when trying to think or speak of God. He is *not* like the objects of our daily experience. He is not limited, not finite, not caused. We may even say that he is not good, not intelligent; but here we must be careful, for when we deny that God is good and intelligent, we do not mean that he does not possess these perfections, but only that he does not possess them in the limited way which is implied in our human concepts.

From what has been said it is evident that every time we use one of our concepts about God we must correct it. We must use concepts, for without them we cannot think. But all our concepts imply finiteness and a relation to the imagination and to matter. Therefore we must correct them by excluding this essential limitation and materiality.

We can do this by using analogy, by affirming that God is partially like the creatures to which our concepts apply, partially unlike these creatures. An analogous term contains a synthesis of affirmation and negation (like and unlike creatures). One way of expressing this is to put the prefix "super" before an adjective expressing some quality. Thus we say that God is super-intelligent, super-good, etc.

These analogous terms are the appropriate terms when we are thinking or speaking of God. They represent an effort to translate into words the very movement by which our

intellect always grasps and affirms that reality which lies beyond all its objects.

We do not apply these analogous terms to God by putting together *previously known* positive and negative terms. Rather we reach the positive and negative concepts only by analyzing the "transcending" concepts, which express the very dynamism of our intellect. We can *affirm* some properties of God and *deny* that he possesses them in the way they exist in creatures only because God is known to us as he who is always beyond anything we can conceive, as the final and perfectly satiating object of the infinite yearning of our intellect and of our will.

This allows us to answer a serious objection. It can be put as follows: the concepts which we use to designate God must all be corrected before they apply to him. How can we correct these inadequate concepts unless we have an adequate concept of God with which we can compare them? But we know that we have no adequate concept of God. How, then, can we correct our admittedly inadequate concepts of him?

It is true that we have not a single adequate concept of God. We know God as the all-surpassing reality towards which our intellect keeps striving in every act of knowledge. We have no image of God, we cannot *picture* or *represent* him before our mind's eye. But our intellect points towards him, intends him, *signifies* and *means* him. When we want to think or speak of God, we translate into concepts or words the "all-transcending" dynamism of our intellect. When we affirm something of God, we must distinguish in our judgment *that which* is signified or meant and *the manner in which* it is signified or meant. The manner in which we signify or mean God (the representation) is always deficient, but that which we signify

or mean is correct, because it is backed up by the intuition of our intellectual dynamism.

It is useful to insist upon this point and to show that this is really the doctrine of St. Thomas. For, surprisingly enough, he is sometimes represented as agnostic or semi-agnostic with regard to God's essence. It is not too difficult to cast him in such a role by emphasizing some of his sayings and ignoring others. The following text sounds rather agnostic:

> Since our intellect does not reach the divine substance, that which constitutes God's substance remains beyond our intellect, and is thus unknown to us. And therefore this is the last word of human knowledge about God, that it knows that it does not know God, insofar as it realizes that what God is exceeds everything which we understand about him.[2]

But other texts of St. Thomas have quite a different tone:

> We cannot know whether something is, unless we know in some way what it is, either with perfect knowledge, or at least with a confused knowledge. This applies also to God.[3]
>
> But as regards names of God said absolutely and affirmatively, as *good, wise,* and the like . . . these names signify the divine substance, and are predicated substantially of God, although they fall short of representing him.[4]
>
> Therefore, as to the names applied to God, there are two things to be considered—viz. the perfections themselves which they signify, such as goodness, life, and the like, and their mode

[2] *Quaest. Disput., de Potentia,* 7, 5, ad 14.
[3] *In Boeth. de Trinitate,* 6, 3. c.
[4] *S. Theol.,* I, 13, 2. c.

of signification. As regards what is signified by these names, they belong properly to God, and more properly than they belong to creatures, and are applied primarily to him. But as regards their mode of signification, they do not properly and strictly apply to God; for their mode of signification befits creatures.[5]

But, as was shown above, these names are applied to God not as to the cause only, but also essentially. For the words, God is *good,* or *wise,* signify not only that he is the cause of wisdom or goodness, but that these exist in him in a more excellent way.[6]

Commenting on these texts, Professor Defever writes:

The firm distinction between signification and representation adequately resolves the apparent opposition between the assertions of the Angelic Doctor concerning our knowledge of God. He affirms, on the one hand, that we do not know what God is, except in a negative and confused way—and, on the other hand, that a series of names belongs to him "absolutely," "essentially," "properly," "substantially," "eminently." He claims that God has no definition, yet he teaches that we know his proper essence and that which distinguishes him from his creatures.

Our ignorance of God . . . refers always to the representation. This representation seems always linked up with some "seeing" ("to see the essence of God") . . . Not to have a representation of God means "not to *see what he is.*" It is with good reason that such a knowledge of God is denied of us. If we had it, it would be univocal, and God would no longer be God.

But quite as explicitly, and often in the same context, St. Thomas adds that through and beyond that representation—or viewing—which is quidditative and deficient, we *predicate* and

[5] *Ibid.,* 1, 13, 3, c.

[6] *Ibid.,* I, 13, 6, c. See also the author's *Philosophical Psychology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 2d ed., 1960), pp. 273 ff.

signify of God his nature and his essence, we reach, without viewing, the non-represented, non-quidditative equivalent of "what he is," of his definition. . . .

If one goes back to God solely from the *represented* effects, by way of causality, one will end up with a univocal God and one will not know him at all. That is why one must reach him in his eminence, in his transcendence, where he appears as "first cause," as a cause which is not merely induced, but as a cause which communicates something of its own excellence . . . .

But we know God in his transcendence only if we know him as the ultimate end of all that which is known. And this is possible only if we have grasped that, in every one of its acts, our knowledge transcends the limited and limiting object which it reaches.[7]

It is not valid, therefore, to claim that the positive terms which we apply to God give us no positive knowledge of him. Thus when we say that God is wise and good, we do not merely mean that he is the cause of these qualities in creatures. This would not tell us much about God himself. We never say of God that he is healthy or skillful, although we know that he is also the cause of these qualities in his creatures.

Likewise it is incorrect to say that, when we affirm that God is wise and good, we only affirm that he is not subject to the opposite defects, that he is not unwise or evil. For we never say that God is healthy or skillful, although we know very well that he is not sickly or clumsy.

We never predicate of God any perfection which contains some imperfection in its very nature. Such perfections are called *mixed* perfections; they involve essentially a relation to the body, to matter, to space and time. Health and skill are mixed perfections. They exist in God *virtually* and *emi-*

[7] *La Preuve réelle de Dieu,* pp. 82–83.

nently. That means that he causes them in his creatures and that he possesses whatever perfection they contain in an infinitely higher degree and without their inherent imperfections.

Other perfections, which are called *pure* perfections, involve no essential relation to matter, space and time. God possesses them *formally* and *eminently*—that is, according to their proper meaning, and without the limitation which they always possess in creatures.

God is the Infinite Being. We know from ontology that being is one, true and good. Therefore God is infinitely one, infinitely true and infinitely good. We must now examine in some detail the divine unity, truth and goodness and all the properties deriving from them.

GOD'S UNITY

Since God is perfect being, he is perfectly one. There are absolutely no parts, no components in him. If there were parts in God, these parts would be, as such, in potency to union; they would require some extraneous cause to unify them. But there can be no potency in the Pure Act, nor can any extraneous influence on him be admitted. Hence in God there is no distinction of existence and essence, substance and accidents, faculties, properties or attributes. God's essence is identical with his existence, his essence is to exist. His intellect is identified with his will. When we think of God we distinguish certain properties and attributes in him; we are inclined to say that God has consciousness, intellect and will, goodness and justice. Strictly speaking, we should say instead that God *is* all these things; he *is* consciousness, intellect, will,

goodness and justice. He is Idea, he is Love. In the divine simplicity all these perfections coincide, somewhat as the different colors of the rainbow merge into the one dazzling blaze of the sun.

We can and must say, therefore, that God's goodness is identified with his justice. When realized in a finite way, goodness and justice are distinct perfections. When they are carried to infinity, they coincide with all other perfections. Even so, however, their finite effects in creatures remain distinct, so that we have a reason for speaking of different perfections in God. But that reason lies not in God but in his creatures. When we affirm that God is both merciful and just, we do not say two distinct things of him, but we imply that some of the effects which he works in creatures are clearly different from each other. We say that God possesses without any distinction perfections which, when realized in creatures, are clearly distinct.

The divine simplicity, as explained above, may strike some readers as an imperfection rather than as a supreme perfection. We admire the variety and the wealth of different qualities in the people we know, we are delighted to discover ever new aspects and features in the objects of our admiration. And now we are told that in God there is nothing of the kind—no contrasts, no diversity, everything perfectly uniform, infinitely monotonous.

This is, of course, a difficulty deriving from our imagination. All the advantages which we discover in distinctions and differences are, like all other perfections, found in God, only at such a degree of intensity that we no longer perceive them; we get an impression of uniformity and monotony where in reality there is a supreme superabundance of life.

God is one also in the sense that there is only one God, that God is unique. This follows at once from his infinity. If there were several Gods, they would differ in something; each one of them would have to possess something the others lacked or lack something the others possessed. Hence none of them would be infinitely perfect, none of them would really be God.

Further, beings can be multiplied in only two ways: when their essence is composed of form and matter (human beings) or when their essence, though containing no material component, is distinct from their existence (angels). But we know that there is no matter in God, and his existence is not distinct from his essence. Therefore, the multiplication of the divine nature is absolutely impossible.[8]

Beings which change are not perfectly one, since they become what they were not and are no longer what they were, and also because something in them does not change while something else changes. Therefore God cannot change, he is immutable. This is even more evident when we consider God as Pure Act. Every change implies a passage from potency to act, which is absolutely excluded from God. God did not begin to exist, he will never cease to exist. He never acquires any new perfection, nor does he lose any. When he acts in the world, the only change occurs in the world, not in him.

It follows that God is eternal. Eternity is the duration which belongs properly to the Pure Act, as time is the duration

[8] It is not the task of the philosopher to explain how the divine simplicity, as demonstrated in philosophy, can be reconciled with the mystery of the divine Trinity, as known from Revelation and interpreted by theology. Suffice it to say that even theology claims that there is only one divine nature.

of material beings. The traditional definition of eternity derives from Boethius: "*Interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio,*" "the perfect possession of unending life enjoyed all at once." We receive our existence as it were drop by drop, moment after moment. We never live more than the one present instant of it. Suppose that these different instants should coalesce, so that we might live in one moment what is now stretched out along the course of time. We should then enjoy possession of our life "all at once." But even so, we should not be eternal like God, because our life had a beginning and because our possession of it is not perfect. Eternity supposes the absence of any beginning, any end and any change. It is coextensive with time, all times are present to it. For God there is no present or future, all things are always present to him.

If God is supremely one, he is also perfectly identified with himself, perfectly self-present, without any opacity, without any unconsciousness. God is perfect Self-Identity, Self-Presence, Self-Consciousness. There is not the slightest degree of unconsciousness in God.

This is worth insisting upon, not only because some kinds of pantheism conceive of God as evolving gradually from a total absence of consciousness to a total consciousness, but also because some psychoanalytically-orientated philosophies hold that the Unconscious comes first in reality, is the creative matrix from which all consciousness slowly emerges. This may be true of the human mind in a chronological sense; our consciousness emerges gradually from a primitive stage of unconsciousness. Not so with the Divine Mind: it does not emerge from the Unconscious; it is always Perfect Conscious-

ness. The Unconscious is only a participation at a low degree of the total perfection of the All-Conscious.

In a certain sense, therefore, we are in agreement with idealism in putting at the summit of reality a supreme Consciousness, or Mind or Spirit. Where we disagree is when the idealist conceives of that mind as immanent in the universe, or holds that the human mind's outlook on reality coincides with that of the divine mind. Against this we assert that God is transcendent, and that we look at the universe not from a central but from an eccentric or peripheral position.

GOD'S INTELLIGENCE

This brings us naturally to a consideration of the transcendental attribute of truth and of the intelligence of God.

God is supremely intelligent, he is Intelligence. He is also infinitely intelligible, which means that everything in him not only can be known, but is actually known by him. If our knowledge of God is deficient, this is due not to any lack of intelligibility in God, but to the weakness of our intellectual powers.

As Supreme Consciousness, God is always actually knowing himself and actually known by himself. Nothing escapes this knowledge, it comprehends the entire divine reality. There is no unconscious in God. One of the fundamental mistakes of some pantheists is that of transferring the conditions of human knowledge to divine knowledge. We can know ourselves only after first knowing an object which is distinct from us. Our self-knowledge is reflective knowledge, and it supposes the cognition of some object upon which it can reflect. Applying

these features of human knowledge to God, some pantheists assert that he likewise must know some object distinct from himself before he can reach self-consciousness. Therefore he produces unconsciously, by necessary emanation, a created universe, and from knowing this "object" he arrives finally at self-knowledge.

Instead of thus conceiving the perfect on the model of the imperfect, we should proceed in exactly the opposite way. God is subsistent Knowledge, Intelligence, Idea. Our reflective self-knowledge is only a low degree of participation of divine self-knowledge. Since God is totally removed from matter and from potency, which are the only obstacles to consciousness, he is totally and eternally self-conscious.

Another reason we have for rejecting pantheism can briefly be put as follows: According to pantheism there is only one substance, God; all other beings are modes or objective determinations of the one divine substance. All the actions of all these beings are ultimately actions of God, totally imputable to him. This is incompatible with the well-established fact of human liberty, and it makes God the only responsible author of all moral evil.

God knows not only himself, but also all that which proceeds from him or could proceed from him in some way through creation. That means that he knows all creatures, past, present and future and also all possible creatures. He knows what all these creatures did, do, or will do, and he knows also what merely possible creatures would do if they existed. Should God not know all these things, he would be in potency to that knowledge, and he would not be God.

God knows also all the free acts of the human creature,

not only those which occurred in the past or are happening now, but also those which will occur in the future. Not only does God know what I shall freely do in what is for me the future, but also what I would freely have done or would do in circumstances which will never be realized. It does not take much reflection to realize that this presents a real problem when it is seen in relation to the doctrine of human freedom. We shall consider that difficult problem in some detail later, when speaking of divine Providence. Here we remark only that the fact that God knows what I shall freely do in the future does not mean that God has a *foreknowledge* of my free acts, since God is not in time; everything is present to him; he knows my free acts as present, in his eternal "now."

Whatever God knows, he knows in himself, not by means of concepts or judgments, but directly in and through his essence. Yet he knows these things as they are in themselves, not only as they are in the divine idea or exemplar. For everything is what it is inasmuch as it depends on God, and this dependence is perfectly known to God.

GOD'S WILL

Being is essentially consciousness, active self-identity, self-presence. In this primordial reality we can distinguish two poles, that of the subject and that of the object. They are identified or identical (self-identity), one is always present to the other (self-presence).

When the accent is on the subject pole, we have the activity of knowing. Being as object is present to being as subject through an activity of being as subject. Considered in that way

being is *true*. When the accent is on the object pole, we have the activity of willing or loving. Being as subject is present to being as object because of an activity of being as object. Considered in that way being is *good*.

God, who is supremely being, is therefore supremely willing and loving, and infinitely good. He wills and loves himself necessarily, but this necessity has nothing to do with determinism. There is no coercion, no blind impulse in this love. Although necessary, it is infinitely lucid and free,[9] because it is steeped in luminous self-consciousness and expresses God's deepest nature. In other words, if we mean by "free," autonomous, performed with complete self-mastery, without external coercion or blind internal compulsion, then we must say that God loves himself with sovereign freedom. If, on the other hand, we mean by "free," not necessary, implying the possibility of the opposite state of affairs, then we must say that God loves himself not freely but necessarily.

When we claim that God wills and loves, we must exclude from these activities every feature deriving from finiteness or matter. Therefore God's willing entails no wanting, no desiring, no striving, since these aspects imply a lack of something and a passing from potency to act. It is pure love and enjoyment of his own infinite perfection. His love is not an emotion or a feeling but a perfectly spiritual activity.

God wills and loves all creatures. He does not will or love them because of their own intrinsic goodness, for that would make him dependent on them. He wills and loves in them the divine goodness which they have been made to share to some extent.

God wills creatures freely, in the sense that he does not

[9] *De Pot.*, 10, 2, ad 5.

have to will them, he could also not have willed them. If God had to will creatures necessarily, he would depend on them as on necessary ends or means, and he would no longer be God.

God's freedom in willing creatures seems to contradict his immutability. If God is free to will or not to will creatures, he must be essentially undetermined to either possibility. And since he actually wills creatures, the question arises of some passage from this essential indetermination to an explicit determination.

We cannot help considering things in this way, and to us there seems to be an obvious contradiction. As is frequently the case when we think of God, we have here two assertions, both equally certain, which we are unable to reconcile: God wills creatures freely; there can be no change in God. If there had been no creatures, this would be a change, but not in God, only in the universe. We must *say* this, we do not clearly *see* it. The difficulty seems to derive from the fact that we assume that every action produces a change not only in the product of that action but also in the agent. This may be true for finite agents, it is not true for the infinite agent. When the Pure Act communicates some of his fullness to creatures, there is no change in the Pure Act, but only in these creatures.

GOD AS A PERSON

Since a person is a spiritual substance, God is a Person. The notion of a person, like all other notions applied to God, is used analogically. We know only finite persons, and one of the most striking features of these persons is that they are

limited, mutually exclusive and opposed to one another. But this limitation and opposition is not essential to the idea of a person. When we say of God that he is a person, we exclude the conception of him as a blind, impersonal, anonymous power. God, although infinite, is a luminous center of consciousness, a focus of infinite love, a supreme Ego, a person.

Personality and intersubjectivity seem to go together. We find it hard to conceive of a person who is alone of his kind, without any equal with whom to commune. Yet such is the conception of God which human reason forces us to accept. There is only one God. Although God has actually created human persons, he does not need them, he could have existed eternally without them. The eternal solitude of the Infinite puzzles our mind.

Might it not be said, then, that our mind welcomes the revealed doctrine of the Trinity, of the three divine persons in the one divine nature? Reason is not only unable to discover, it is even unable to understand that doctrine. It is, however, not entirely unprepared for it. We know by reason that God is infinite self-consciousness and self-volition. He knows himself and he loves himself in an infinitely perfect way. He utters himself in a Word and he loves himself with a Love, which, according to reason, are identically himself. That is where Revelation adds a new unfathomable dimension to the divine reality. It tells us that this Word and this Love are *persons,* consubstantial, absolutely equal to their origin, sharing one nature with him and differing from him and from each other only through the opposing relations between them through which each is constituted as a distinct person. This makes the divine being more mysterious than ever, but it removes the puzzle of the divine solitude.[10]

[10] Cf. De Finance, *Existence et Liberté,* pp. 152–155.

5

God and the World

CREATION

God created everything. To create means to make out of nothing. "Nothing" is not a stuff from which God made all his creatures; "out of nothing" is meant to convey the idea that there was no pre-existing material cause which God transformed into the creatures we know. When we make something, we always use available materials (wood, bricks, sounds, ideas), and we rearrange them into some new pattern. In other words, we are not causing the total being of that which we make, but only introducing some new disposition, or "form," into available materials. God, on the other hand, is the total cause of the beings which he creates.

As soon as we understand this, we see that God has created everything. This follows from the principle of causality, according to which all beings which are not self-existent depend on the Self-existent Being. Since this applies not only to all creatures as we know them, but also to any eventual pre-existing materials, all creatures depend totally on God, they have been created by him.

We have shown that God created everything which exists. Since we have demonstrated previously that God wills his creatures freely, it follows that God does not create necessarily, but freely. All pantheists assert the necessity of creation. The reason for this doctrine has been discussed above, where we also showed that it derives ultimately from some kind of intellectual anthropomorphism.

Although there is a very great difference between "to create" and "to make," we have a tendency to conceive both on the same pattern. We hold vaguely that, as creatures, we depend on God somewhat in the way in which the desk on which I am writing depends on the carpenter who made it. That artisan used wood and nails and tools to knock the desk together. He made it a few years ago, and since then it exists, without needing his help any longer. Such is definitely not the creature's relation to the Creator. The desk's *origin* (*fieri,* becoming) is explained by the carpenter, but not its present continued *existence* (*esse*). Whereas in the case of a creature it is not the origin, or not only the origin, but the continued existence which is caused by the Creator. Rather than depending on God as the desk depends on the carpenter, we depend on him as the light in the bulb depends on the electric current. God not only created everything, he conserves everything in existence. This protracted creation is known as *conservation.* Everyday language seems to reserve the term "creation" for the temporal beginning of the creative activity. But even should the world have existed from all eternity and have no beginning in time, it would still, at every moment, depend totally on God, just as the light of the sun would eternally depend on the sun even if both sun and sunlight had existed from all eternity. In a way it would be more correct to say

that God continually creates everything that exists, in the sense that he causes it to be.

The doctrine of universal creation in no way contradicts the theory of evolution. When we say that God has created everything, we mean that *ultimately* every being depends entirely on him. God is the universal cause of everything that exists. But he uses secondary or intermediate causes to accomplish his designs. Where primitive and, to some extent, medieval man had a tendency to attribute many things directly to the divine causality, modern man, enlightened by science, is more aware of the secondary causes at work in the universe. Our awareness of the importance of the secondary causes makes us appreciate more profoundly the wisdom and the power of the Creator. Making an automobile is a great achievement of the human mind, but making a machine which makes automobiles is an incomparably greater one. Our idea of God's power has deepened by passing from the conception of God creating every single plant and animal species directly to the more beautiful conception of God who, by one supreme act of his divine will, flings the universe into existence and directs it to evolve and to set the stage for man.

God is the cause not only of the substance and nature of all beings, but also of all their accidents, including their effects. When a playwright writes a play, his writing and the play itself are beings, and, like all other beings, they are caused by God. This does not mean that the author contributes nothing to the end product of his activity. But since his own mind and muscles (his tools) and the paper, the words and the ideas he uses (his materials) and the senses and minds of his potential readers and audience, in which the play will come alive, are continually kept in existence by God, it is undeniable that

God actively co-operates in the writing, the continued existence, the performance of that play. The same considerations apply to all created activities. The *specification* of these activities depends primarily on the created or secondary cause (although even here the divine causality is at work); their *existence* derives from the primary cause, from the Creator.

God is supremely intelligent and had some purpose in mind when creating everything. What was that purpose? What is the end of creation? God wills only one thing absolutely, his own perfection. Whatever else he wills must in some way be willed on account of the divine perfection. What relation can the created universe have to the divine perfection? Not that of means to an end, for that would suppose that God is striving to achieve his perfection, which is impossible. The relation which creation holds to the divine perfection is that of sharing in it and manifesting it. Therefore the end which God intends in creation is his own divine perfection, as shared and manifested in creatures.

This sharing and manifestation of the divine perfection reaches its peak in man's knowledge and love of God, by which the rational creature freely glorifies his Creator. Hence it is often asserted that God's extrinsic glory is the end of material creation. *Extrinsic* glory, because man's glorification of God does not add anything to God's own perfection and happiness. That traditional formula might be misunderstood, if we consider God's extrinsic glory as something distinct from God. The Supreme Being cannot intend any created reality as an end. It is better, therefore, to say that God's purpose in creating everything is his own perfection as shared and manifested in his creatures, especially in man's spiritual activities.[1] Since

[1] Cf. Grégoire, *Immanence et Transcendance,* pp. 189–190.

creation is essentially an act of sharing, it is also an act of supreme liberality and generosity.

PROVIDENCE

God, as the universal intelligent cause of the universe, directs all his creatures, according to his purpose, to their end. This activity by which God directs and orders all created things to their end is called Providence.

We have no difficulty understanding how God orders unfree creatures to his end. Left to their own devices they reach it necessarily, just by being what they are and by acting according to their God-given nature in their God-given environment.

But there is a real problem where man is concerned. Because man is free, it is up to him to decide whether or not he will reach his (and God's) end. Since man is the peak of material creation, it looks, therefore, as if the highest created activity escaped the divine control and causality. This is impossible. God, who knows and directs everything, knows whether each individual man will reach his end and how he will or will not arrive at his destined goal. And the plan which God has for his creatures will not be frustrated.

But since divine knowledge is infallible and since nothing can resist the divine will, we do not see how man remains free to decide his own fate. Nor is it sufficient to point out, as we have done, that since God is present to all times, there is no real problem in God's foreknowledge of man's ultimate fate, that what we call his foreknowledge is in fact a present knowledge of what is happening to the human person. The problem remains. Does God know how man decides concerning his

own destiny because man decides in this or that way? In that case God would seem to learn something from man, his knowledge would come from without. If, on the other hand, we say that God knows man's destiny independently of what man freely decides, we cannot escape the impression that man acts in this or that way because God foreknows and foreordains it. In that case man is not free.

Here again we have two certain truths: God knows everything in and by himself; man is free. But we do not see how the two assertions can be reconciled. In such instances the temptation to give up one or the other truth is strong.

Thus Bañes[2] and his disciples explain God's knowledge of man's free actions in such a way that it is difficult to see how these actions can still be called free. According to them, when man is all set to make a free decision, he still needs a "physical premotion" coming from God. Without it he cannot reach a free decision, with it he reaches it infallibly in the sense intended by God. Yet under that premotion man remains free. He remains free even while irresistibly "premoved" by God because the divine influence is "transcendent": it does not modify the nature of the beings to which it applies, it makes unfree beings act necessarily and free beings act freely.

It is not necessary to point out the serious difficulties involved in this theory. Not only does it seem to take away all real human freedom, it also seems to make God the cause of moral evil. It safeguards admirably the divine omniscience and omnipotence, but at the expense of human freedom. This is too great a price to pay.

Another attempt to reconcile Providence and human free-

[2] Domingo Bañes, O.P., illustrious Spanish theologian (1528-1604).

dom was presented by Molina,[3] who proposed the theory of "*scientia media*" or intermediate knowledge. It is intermediate between God's knowledge of vision, whereby he knows all that which exists, and his knowledge of simple intelligence, by which he knows everything that is possible. Through his intermediate knowledge God knows all that would happen if certain circumstances, which will never happen, did actually occur. God's intermediate knowledge makes him know, in one simple eternal glance, the infinite number of possible world orders. Having then, in his infinite wisdom, decided on a certain plan for the universe and for every creature in it, he creates that one world order in which all things will do exactly what God wants, the material things necessarily, man freely.

This theory safeguards divine omniscience and omnipotence and also human freedom. But it contains serious difficulties. How does God know what man will do or would do? Because man does it or would do it? Then divine knowledge depends on man's choice. Independently of man's decision? How can such a decision be free? Furthermore it is very difficult, if not impossible, to see how God can know that which is essentially undetermined. But the outcome of a free choice which will never be made is essentially undetermined. To know the undetermined seems to be not just something mysterious, but something contradictory. We should be willing to admit mysteries in God, but not contradictions.

The obscurities involved in this problem may derive from the fact that wrong assumptions have been made somewhere

[3] Luis de Molina, S.J. (1535–1600), famous Spanish theologian, author of a controversial book, the title of which might be translated as "reconciliation of free will with the gifts of grace, divine foreknowledge, providence, predestination and reprobation."

along the line. We cannot give up human freedom, the theoretical evidence and the practical importance of that truth are too solidly established. That is why we reject the theory of physical premotion. But even considered in itself human freedom contains an element of mystery. It is not surprising, then, that the mystery increases when it is compounded with the mystery of divine knowledge and power. *If* the fact that God's knowledge is specified by man's free decision involves some imperfection in God, we can obviously not accept it. Most authors who have studied the problem claim that it involves such an imperfection.[4]

As for the divine power, we should remember that even if man freely decides not to do what God wants him to do, God's plan is not frustrated. For the man who refuses to heed God's call, as it comes to him through the moral law, freely punishes himself, destroys himself, and thus continues to pay homage to God in his very act of revolt.

If no solution is satisfactory, it remains only to remind ourselves that we are bound to meet mysteries in the study of the Infinite Being. If the finite mind of man were capable of totally understanding the Infinite reality of God, there would be a strong suspicion that what man understood in that way was not really God. Should someone object that we demonstrate God's existence in order to explain the mystery of finite reality, only to reinstate the mystery in the explanation, we would welcome the objection, pointing out that in God mystery is where it belongs, and, because of this, does not shock our mind as it does when we find it in the heart of finite reality.

[4] For a dissenting opinion, see Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Ontology*, pp. 211–213.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

If we were to find out the main reason why quite a number of intelligent people refuse to admit the existence of God, we would probably discover that it was the existence of evil. These people argue as follows: Evil can exist only if God wills or allows it. But if he wills or allows it, this means either that he cannot prevent it, because he is not omnipotent, or that he does not want to prevent it, because he is not infinitely good.

We might as well admit at once that the problem of evil is a very difficult one and that reason alone cannot solve it entirely. We can explain the existence of evil to some extent, we can show that there is no contradiction between the occurrence of evil and the existence of God. But these explanations do not entirely satisfy the human mind, and especially not the human heart. Even Revelation does not quite remove the difficulty, although its explanations are more satisfactory than those of reason.[5]

After this preliminary warning, we shall tackle the problem by remembering some teachings of ontology. Every being is good. Therefore evil cannot be a being, it must be the absence of some being. Not every absence of being is evil. The fact that trees do not see and that men have no wings is not an evil. Evil is the absence of some good, some perfection in a being which should possess it; it is a privation. If a tree has no leaves in the summer because of a blight, or if a man has no eyes, that is evil.

The evil whose occurrence shocks the human mind most is suffering. The appalling amount of suffering which occurred,

[5] A look at the Crucifix goes further in explaining the nature and reason of evil than the perusal of many learned treatises of philosophy.

for instance, in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps cannot, in some people's minds, be reconciled with the existence of an almighty and infinitely good God. Are pain and suffering, too, a mere absence or privation? They are not. They are the repercussion, within a sensibility or a consciousness, of some evil. The poor inmates of Dachau and Sachsenhausen should have enjoyed freedom, security, decent food and lodging, the presence and affection of their family, good medical care when sick, and so on. Their suffering was a positive event (not a mere privation) brought about by frightful hardships, by the absence of basic goods which, as human beings, they were entitled to expect. We insist upon this point. Evil is indeed nothing but a privation, but the resulting pain is not. And it is precisely the pain and suffering which is the greatest stumbling block for many honestly inquiring minds on the way to God. When a child is slowly dying in unbearable pain from inoperable cancer, it sounds callous to speak of his pain and that of his distraught parents as of a mere privation. Yet it is the consequence of such a privation, and it would disappear if the absent good, the child's health, were to be restored. Therefore the philosopher, while aware of the human aspects of the problem, must be allowed to look at it with a cold analytic mind and will continue to maintain that evil itself is basically a privation.

The two cases we have mentioned have obviously very different causes. The first one (concentration camp) was brought about by human cruelty, the second is the result of natural events (sickness). This invites us to introduce into the discussion an important distinction between moral and physical evil. We speak of *moral* evil when the lack or privation occurs in the human will; in all other cases we speak of *physical* evil.

The two kinds of evil must be explained. Let us first consider moral evil, for, as is evident from our first example, a great amount of physical evil derives from it and must be explained by it. There is moral evil whenever man's free will lacks its right orientation, refuses to heed the call of duty or of moral obligation. Here again we meet a privation, but one which is brought about by a positive act: the free act by which man prefers to the real good some apparent good which satisfies one of his tendencies. Whenever a person yields to greed, pride, ambition, hatred, cruelty, jealousy, etc., he performs a positive act (in theological language, a sin) which lacks an essential feature of all free acts, referability to man's ultimate end.

Moral evil is the worst kind of evil, because it affects the highest material creature of God in its highest powers. We have already seen that God created all things in order that they may share and manifest his own perfection. This sharing and manifesting of God's perfection finds its highest peak in man's intellect and will, when man freely loves and serves God. God's extrinsic glory is most perfectly realized in man's love and service. Moral evil consists precisely in man's refusal to give God this love and service, and therefore it represents the greatest disorder in God's plan.

Hence it would be contradictory for God to will moral evil, either directly or indirectly, either as that which he intends or even as that which follows necessarily from what he intends. He only allows it as something which follows (not necessarily) from the greatest good conferred on his highest creature: man's free will. If man is to be made capable of freely serving and loving God, he will also be capable of freely refusing that service and love. God would have suppressed all

possibility of moral evil by making of man a being determined in all his actions, as are all other material creatures. But then man would not be man. Spirituality and determinism do not go together. If man is to be a spirit in matter, he must be free, the risk has to be run that he may set himself up against his Creator. God is not the cause of moral evil, but he is the cause of the possibility of moral evil. By making man into a spirit, he made it possible for him to commit moral evil. Whoever thinks that this is too high a price for human freedom might meditate the beautiful words of Péguy:

A salvation that was not free, that was not, that did not come from a free man could in no wise be attractive to us. What would it amount to?
What would it mean?
What interest would such a salvation have to offer?
A beatitude of slaves, a salvation of slaves, a slavish beatitude, how do you expect me to be interested in that kind of thing? Does one care to be loved by slaves? . . .
When you once have known what it is to be loved freely, submission no longer has any taste.
All the prostrations in the world
Are not worth the beautiful upright attitude of a free man as he kneels. All the submission, all the dejection in the world
Are not equal in value to the soaring up point,
The beautiful straight soaring up of one single invocation
From a love that is free.[6]

Physical evil must be explained in a different way. It is not in direct contradiction to the divine plan, so God does not only allow it, he wills it, although only indirectly. He cannot will it

[6] Charles Péguy, *God Speaks,* trans. Julian Green (New York: Pantheon, 1945), p. 29.

directly, since a privation is not a being. But he can will creatures whose activities will bring about a certain amount of physical evil. What God wills is the material universe as a whole led on by the spiritual creature which is man. This universe is a very complex totality of countless mutually interacting elements.

Physical evil may result in two ways from this interaction. Sometimes two causal series, which are normally unfolding their effects according to the laws of nature, will cross each other, with unexpected, unintended, catastrophic results for some creatures. Thus a geological causal series may bring about an earthquake at a certain spot. A biological series of events had produced, on that same spot, a beautiful stand of Douglas firs. The landslide resulting from the earthquake uproots and kills all these stately trees. This is an instance of physical evil, and one which most people accept without difficulty. They see that if there is to be a universe running according to its own laws, such events are bound to occur, and very few men expect God to interfere continually to prevent them.

But suppose that, instead of a stand of firs, a large village, the product of a long series of cultural events, occupies that spot. The earthquake utterly destroys it; most houses collapse, many peoples are crushed under the debris, others are maimed for life, a few are burned alive in the fires which started; families are decimated, small children are orphaned; epidemics rage unchecked, bringing in their wake many more deaths, untold suffering and misery. This is a case of physical evil caused in exactly the same way as the previous one, but one which will, unlike the other, fill quite a number of people with doubts about the existence of God, because here the evil affects

human beings and produces many instances of acute suffering and pain.

Did God will these physical evils? Not directly, but indirectly. He wills the two causal series of events which brought them about; hence he wills also indirectly all the pain and suffering involved. Is God able to prevent such events? Without the slightest doubt. Why, then, does he not do so? We do not know. If the answer to the question were: because he does not care, we should have to conclude that God does not exist.[7] But there are other possible answers. God may have in mind goods greater than would result from the prevention of such physical evils. The difficulty derives from the fact that, in this case, man is affected by evil. But there is an eternal element in man, his spiritual soul. Compared with eternity, any kind of earthly suffering, however strongly it may grip our emotions, vanishes into insignificance. It should not be difficult for God to compensate overabundantly for any pain and suffering which he may have inflicted upon man on earth. Moreover, moral growth, the highest created good, seems to require a certain amount of effort and pain. Soft living and moral greatness have never gone together.

We are far from claiming that our explanation is totally satisfying. A real difficulty remains. Reason alone gropes pretty much in the dark.[8] However, these considerations will at least show us that the non-existence of God is definitely not the only possible explanation of the occurrence of physical evil.

[7] In that hypothesis, the reality of God's love and of his existence would be "falsified." See the quotations from Antony Flew on p. 115.

[8] Faith is a great help here. Whoever believes that God has died on a cross is convinced that pain and suffering are not totally evil.

We mentioned another way in which physical evil may result from the interaction of the innumerable elements constituting the universe. In every ordered totality the more universal good has precedence over the less universal good. When these two clash, particular advantages have to be sacrificed. Amputation in the individual, the death of soldiers in the defense of their country are but two applications of this universal law. The same principle explains many cases of physical evil in the universe. Thus small fish are swallowed by bigger fish which are, in their turn, eaten by man. Whether a real universe, in the sense of a natural organic whole running by itself according to its own laws, would be possible at all without such occurrences of physical evil is very doubtful.

It looks as if the explanation given for physical evil might satisfy most people, were it not for the involvement of man and the occurrence of pain and suffering. When a stand of trees is uprooted in a landslide few people are shocked. That fish are caught to serve as food should stir up protests only from vegetarians. And even they have to inflict physical evil upon the plants they feed on, directly or indirectly. As for the difficult problem of human pain, it should be remembered that such pain may and should be the occasion of higher moral values, that God has at his disposal many ways in which to compensate abundantly for human suffering. Finally we should bear in mind that a large amount of human suffering results from moral evil, from man's own inhumanity towards his fellow human beings.

The modern mind is especially shocked by "innocent suffering," pain and suffering in children and animals. Several reasons seem to account for that attitude. A child has never

done anything evil, why should it be punished? A child is too young to derive any moral growth from pain and suffering, why should it have to go through the ordeal? A child is so powerless against suffering; it breaks the heart to see these innocent victims in the grip of blind forces they do not understand.

This is a noble human reaction with which everybody in his right mind will fully sympathize. But it does not really add any new elements to what we have previously said. The first two of the foregoing considerations contain much truth, although it should be noted that we did not try to explain pain as a punishment for past transgressions, and that many adults, too, get no moral profit from their sufferings, since, instead of accepting them patiently and reacting to them positively, they rebel against them and allow bitterness to fill their hearts. As for the third objection mentioned above, we may wonder whether it really increases the difficulty. True, the child is powerless in the grip of pain, but that very powerlessness, the lack of struggle and especially the lack of full comprehension, may make the pain less acute and easier to bear. It is precisely the vain struggling and the keen consciousness of his hopeless plight which aggravate the purely physical burden of suffering in the adult. The absence in the child of struggle and full realization works somewhat like a "tranquilizer"—which is lacking to the adult, especially to these civilized and highly cultivated adults who are most prone to pity the innocent suffering child.

Our last remarks apply *a fortiori* to suffering animals. There seems to be no doubt that the perception of pain in animals is rendered considerably less acute by their much dimmer consciousness. Even those very humane people who sympathize so

much with animal suffering may occasionally crush a mosquito, or perhaps even go fishing, without too many qualms, owing to their conviction that whatever pain they inflict on these innocent victims must be negligible in view of the low degree of consciousness we suspect in them. It is most probable that awareness, and therefore the feeling of pain, increases in the higher species, but it is probable too that it remains considerably below the human level.

It seems to us that these remarks, without totally solving the problem, considerably minimize the difficulty. In the existence of a being destined to live *forever,* as the human child is, a few days or even weeks of suffering should not weigh too heavily in the balance. That children should be made to suffer forever, as even a saint such as Augustine seemed to think possible, is utterly unacceptable to our modern mind, and would make one doubt the goodness, and therefore the very existence, of God. But no child is made to suffer forever. Animal suffering remains something of a problem, but when it is considered without sentimentality that problem is by no means serious enough to make one doubt God's existence or goodness.

Countless difficulties and objections could be directed against these attempts at some "theodicy," or vindication of God. We shall mention a few of them and merely indicate the general way in which we should try to answer them.

1. Could not God, in his omniscience and omnipotence, have selected, among the infinite number of possible universes, one in which all cases of physical evil would be eliminated?

—We do not know. I doubt it.

2. Could God not have created man with less susceptibility

to pain? It is not so much physical evil itself as its repercussion on man through pain and suffering which shocks the human mind.

—Here again we do not know. God could probably have made man less susceptible to pain. But would this not have entailed other difficulties? Physical pain has a biological function. It warns man of danger to his health and pushes him into doing something about it. It must be admitted, however, that the purpose of pain is often not evident. Real dangers frequently arise without the warning of pain (beginning of cancer); disturbances which are not dangerous are accompanied by intense pain (toothache); the warning of pain continues with acute discomfort long after the possibility of doing something about it has passed (terminal cancer pains). Why all this should be so, we simply do not know.

Uncivilized people generally are less susceptible to pain; the capacity for suffering seems to increase with the cultural and mental development of the individual. Is the capacity for suffering necessarily connected with the development of consciousness? Possibly. Probably. Is this necessarily so? Could God not have created men in whom great mental and cultural development would not have increased the capacity for suffering? We do not know.

All these objections take for granted that God should have created a universe with the least possible amount of evil, especially of suffering. If the objector is asked why he thinks God should have acted in that way, the answer will ultimately be that, to his mind, it is the right way, the best way, the way *he* would have acted if he were God. But this is either a rather crude anthropomorphism or a serious misunderstanding of the scope of metaphysical reflection. Metaphysics gives us

some absolute knowledge which is applicable to all reality, even to God. Thus we know that God is and cannot not be, that he is good and that he cannot not love the good, etc. But metaphysics tells us nothing about the way in which God must realize these metaphysical necessities, and all attempts to figure out what God should do are therefore, in the final analysis, nothing but naive anthropomorphism. Finite minds are and must be unable to fathom the Infinite.

We realize that our rebuttal may expose us to another serious objection. It goes somewhat like this: You claim that God's existence must be admitted because without it you cannot explain finite reality. You accuse those who claim that an infinite series of causes is sufficient to explain everything of a lack of respect for the demands of their intellect. But when their intellect demands an explanation for the appalling amount of apparently senseless suffering which fills our earth, you tell them that this is a mystery, that they cannot expect to understand it. You are obviously using a double standard.

We have already suggested an answer to this objection. It is true that we refuse to accept the mystery of finite beings without trying to explain it, and that, on the other hand, we are willing to accept mysteries in the being whose existence is supposed to clear up the mystery of reality. Not only is this not a contradiction or a double standard, it is the way things must be. If we have to explain the reality of the universe through the existence of a being who is Pure Act and Infinite Perfection, we *must* find mysteries in that being's nature and activities. Otherwise we are not talking about the Infinite. We have expelled mystery from the sphere in which it gives legitimate offense to our minds and have concentrated it where

it belongs, where our intellect expects and even demands it. Mystery is acceptable for our intellect if we understand why it must occur where we find it.

3. The presence of moral evil in the universe is attributed to human freedom. If there could be no real freedom without the possibility of moral evil, this explanation would have a real value. But it looks very much as if perfect freedom could exist without any possibility, or at least without the occurrence, to say nothing of the frequent occurrence, of moral evil. Does Catholic theology not speak of the saint confirmed in grace, whose will is so powerfully drawn by God that, although he remains perfectly free, it is inconceivable that he should ever stray from the path of duty?

—It is true that God can so fill a human being with his grace that the possibility of moral evil is practically excluded without any abridgment of freedom. What the objection suggests, therefore, is that God should have made all men into great saints! One cannot help wondering what kind of universe this would have produced! Every man a St. Francis and every woman a St. Teresa! Could real sanctity grow in a world like that? Peaks are not possible without valleys. A universe does not seem possible without diversity, even in the moral order.

Let us summarize the objection taken from the existence of evil in the world once more:

Either God is supremely good, he cannot will evil; but, since evil exists, it is obvious that he cannot prevent it: hence he is not omnipotent. Or God is omnipotent: he can prevent evil, and

he does not prevent it; hence he is not infinitely good. But if he lacks either attribute, God is not truly God.[9]

Let us examine that dilemma point for point. *Either God is supremely good, he cannot will evil.* A distinction is necessary here: he cannot will moral evil, true. He cannot will physical evil directly, true. But he can will it indirectly, as an accidental result of some good and as a means to some greater good. *But since evil exists, it is evident that he cannot prevent it: hence he is not omnipotent.* This does not follow. God may have reasons for allowing moral evil and indirectly willing physical evil. So we must say: But since evil exists, it is evident either that God cannot prevent it, or that he does not want to prevent it. Nobody has ever demonstrated that God cannot have good reasons for not wanting to prevent some kinds of evil. *Or God is omnipotent; he can prevent evil.* True. *And he does not prevent it.* True. *Hence he is not infinitely good.* This does not follow. There is another possible explanation: he has sufficient reasons for not preventing it.

It is quite evident that a God conceived within human, or even within purely superhuman, dimensions is incompatible with evil as it exists in the world. But such a God explains nothing and does not exist. Nobody has demonstrated or can demonstrate that there is a contradiction between that evil and an *infinitely* good God. People who reject God because of the existence of evil have too small an idea of God. It might be

[9] Grégoire, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–200. The same author continues: "Bergson has with good reason remarked that this kind of reasoning contains a basic methodological error. One constructs, *a priori*, a certain conception of God and of his relations to the world, and, if things are not as one wants them to be, one asserts that God does not exist."

truly asserted that they are right in rejecting the inadequate God their philosophy conceives.

OUR PERSONAL RELATION TO GOD

We should like to finish this section on the relations which exist between creatures and God by investigating what philosophy can tell us about our own personal relation to God.

Can and must we love the Unlimited Being, whose existence we have demonstrated? If by "to love" we mean: to will, to desire, to strive towards the possession of, man loves God necessarily, albeit implicitly and unconsciously, since, as we have shown above, both his intellect and his will strive necessarily towards the Unlimited Being. This implicit, unconscious love is not always accompanied by explicit, conscious love. Man can reach perfect unity and metaphysical balance only if he loves God with his whole being, both on the conscious and the unconscious levels.

But "to love" does not mean only "to desire, to want to possess," it means also, in a deeper sense, "to desire the good or the happiness of." Since God possesses all perfection, all good and all happiness, this kind of love for him can only assume the form of acquiescing in his reality, welcoming his sovereign perfection, accepting his providential designs. This too man is supposed to do, and, in doing so, he performs, with his intellect and his will, the highest activity of which he is capable on the natural level.

Because of the unavoidable haziness of our natural knowledge of God, this acquiescence in and welcoming of his su-

preme being implies a fundamental confidence and trust in reality, a basic optimism. As the author of a recent and remarkable book on God writes:

> It is necessary to say: We can affirm God only as he whom we *cannot* understand. It is also necessary and more essential to say: We can affirm God only as he whom we *must* trust. And there is an order between these two equally necessary expressions of the affirmation of God. Trust in God is not based on the acknowledgement of his incomprehensibility, as if it were amidst doubts and on account of these doubts that we were allowed to trust God, as if one had to say equivalently: since we cannot understand God . . . it remains possible to trust him. Trust in God posits itself by itself as identified with the affirmation of God. Why? Because to acquiesce in the good and to trust in God is the same movement of thought. Because, if we did not trust God, . . . neither could we trust the exigency which leads us to affirm him.[10]

Everybody has heard of the distinction made by Gabriel Marcel between a *problem* and a *mystery*. Both represent a question which the human mind tries to answer. But in the case of a problem we are not personally involved, we are not one of the data to be considered while looking for an answer. Whereas in the case of a mystery we are personally involved, the meaning of our life is at stake, the conduct we shall have to adopt depends on the answer to the question.

It is obvious then that the question of God's existence is a real mystery. The answer we give to it decides the meaning not only of reality, but also of our own life and destiny. That explains why the answer depends not only on the acuity of our intellect but also on the integrity of our will and the

[10] Delanglade, *Le Problème de Dieu*, pp. 250–251.

love of our heart. In order to discover God it is, if not indispensable, at least very useful to live in such a way that one is willing or even eager to acknowledge his existence.[11]

[11] Excellent things on the "existential" meaning of God for man can be found in Defever, *La Preuve réelle de Dieu,* chapter vi.

Conclusion

As the conclusion of this short introduction to natural theology, I would like to transcribe, with the necessary comments, a few passages from a great metaphysician, Pierre Scheuer.

We ask "Why is the affirmation of the divine existence necessary?" and not "Why is the divine existence necessary?" The second question would imply the ontological argument . . . The question, therefore, is simply: Why do we affirm that there is a first being, and why is that first being *Subsistent Being Itself?*

Answer: In virtue of the principle of identity, understood as a synthetic principle. This principle affirms the adequation of being and the intelligible.[1]

This calls for a few comments. One of Scheuer's basic theses is that the first principle, the principle of identity, "Whatever is, is" means "Being as it is in itself is identical with being as it is in the intellect."

For modern analysts, "Whatever is, is" is a purely analytic principle, a mere tautology. As the basic principle of *logic,* it

[1] "Deux textes inédits," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique,* 79 (1957), p. 823. (My free translation.)

is indeed nothing more. But it is also the basic principle of *metaphysics*. As such, it is synthetic. That is why Scheuer speaks of the "principle of identity understood as a synthetic principle." Many philosophers deny the synthetic nature of that principle. Such a denial involves a contradiction. As a synthetic principle the principle of identity means "Being in itself is identical with being as it is in the intellect." Try to deny the principle, and in your very denial you affirm it. The principle asserts the identity of being in itself and of being in the intellect. You deny that identity. In your intellect you posit the non-identity of being in itself and being in the intellect. And you claim that to this non-identity posited in your intellect corresponds a non-identity in reality. You identify reality and your thought of it. Without such an identification, you cannot deny the synthetic meaning of the principle. Hence, if you want to deny that synthetic meaning, you must affirm it.

This is one way of showing the ineluctable necessity of the affirmation of the absolute, of the metaphysical affirmation. Man cannot think or speak without affirming something absolutely, that is something which is not merely subjective, relative, contingent, something which refers to reality as it is in itself. It is precisely because the human intellect is the faculty of the absolute that it can reach the Absolute. Or rather, the intellect is the faculty of the absolute because, in every affirmation, it co-affirms the Absolute.[2]

This principle affirms the adequation of being and the intelligible. There would be no adequation if the two terms were not equal,

[2] This reminds us of Pierre Rousselot's famous statement: "Intelligence, for St. Thomas, is the faculty of the real, but it is the faculty of the real only because it is the faculty of the divine." *The Intellectualism of St. Thomas* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), p. 2.

if being were not coextensive with the intelligible, and if the intelligible exceeded being. This would be the case if the real were limited, if every reality were composed of act and potency. Such finite, potential objects are intelligible to the extent in which they are in act; they equal the intelligible only partially and incompletely, they are not the intelligible. Therefore, the intelligible, or rather that which in the intelligible might exceed the real, would in itself be nothingness: the intelligible would be non-being. Hence the affirmation of God is implied in the very principle of thought. To think is to affirm God. To say that one need not rise from the finite to the infinite is to say that one need not think.[3]

The reader recognizes our vindication of the principle of causality under another guise. The above passage says in other words that in every one of our existential affirmations, the predicate *is,* is too wide for the subject, and that our intellect yearns for some reality of which it can simply affirm, "This being *is.*"[4]

If we think at all, we affirm God as objectively existing and as necessary: and this affirmation is infallibly true, and requires no other proof beyond itself, because, if it were false, the identity between being and the intelligible would likewise be false; hence thought which, by its very essence, is this affirmation would no longer be thought. Suppose that my thought were able to doubt for one instant whether God is, it would be wondering whether it is really the affirmation of such an identity. Still, *even while doubting,* my thought remains such an affirmation. Contradiction would enter into thought.

Why do we affirm God? On the basis of some intuition? No. As the result of some analytic process? No. As the consequence

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 823.

[4] See pp. 123–124.

of some process of formal reasoning? Once more, no. Through the process of reasoning we come to understand the nature of thought, and in this way we prove to ourselves that God is the ever-present affirmation; however, this affirmation does not originate in us as the conclusion of an argument. We affirm God in the only way in which he can be affirmed: without any "principle," without intuition, without the ontological argument. Since God has no principle, he cannot be affirmed in virtue of a principle distinct from him. Being is because he is being; hence the sole reason for affirming being is that he is being. And such is indeed the way in which we affirm God. God exists, God is, because he is the intelligible, because he is being.[5]

When Scheuer claims that we do not affirm God because of some intuition, he rejects all intuitive knowledge of God during this life. He does not, however, exclude the possibility that we arrive at the knowledge of God through the intuitive awareness of the movement of our intellect, as is evident from the foregoing paragraph and the one which follows below. When he says that God is not reached through reasoning, he means that we do not start to affirm his existence only at the end of a series of statements or syllogisms. Our reasoning serves only to help us see that we affirm his existence with the very first act of our intellect, even before we start reasoning:

> God is affirmed because of the necessary adequation of thought and being; yet this adequation is neither realized nor realizable by the created intellect, for everything which it attains directly is finite, and consequently inadequate. Therefore, *for the created intellect, God is that which is required* for this adequation, *that which supplements the deficient intelligibility proper to the finite.*

[5] Scheuer, "Deux textes inédits," p. 824.

The knowledge of God is identical with the knowledge of the inadequation of the real and the finite; therefore, it is a *negative knowledge*. God is known as that which is beyond the known, as that which remains to be known, as the object of the supreme affirmation, the first principle of all being and of all thought, which remains nevertheless beyond that which is for us the principle of thought. *God is absolutely transcendent.*

Therefore, we should say that we do not know God: he is the Ineffable, the Unknown and the Unknowable. He is not present to knowledge in a positive manner; he remains beyond that which is our object, but he is defined by this very deficiency of our knowledge. We know God through that void which remains in us, through that drive of ours towards the intelligible which, finding only the finite, is almost entirely frustrated; finally as the term of all our activities, although these activities never reach him.[6]

"God is that which supplements the deficient intelligibility proper to the finite." That formula summarizes our vindication of the principle of metaphysical causality, which is the backbone of every demonstration of God's existence. We affirm of every being that it is. But the predicate "*is*," is too wide for every subject used in our statements. That is why we implicitly add to it a "supplement of intelligibility," which is precisely the principle of causality, "exercised" in our every affirmation. We affirm implicitly, because of the very dynamism of our intellect: "This being, inasmuch as it depends on God, is."

One can develop theodicy and metaphysics as a whole analytically as soon as one possesses the principle of the identity of be-

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 825–826. The author's emphasis on the negative character of our knowledge of God does not prevent him from stating, in other passages, that we possess also some positive knowledge of God.

ing and thought. We have said that no one can doubt it, and we have shown the reason why: its denial is unthinkable. Nevertheless, this supreme affirmation remains infinitely mysterious. It constitutes ultimately the very essence of created being, and to fathom it, to perceive its foundation, we would have to fathom our very being and grasp it as it is absolutely. We cannot achieve this, for we remain exterior to ourselves.

Our being is a participation of God: God himself, in some way prolonged and continued outside of himself. Our intellect is a beam of the divine spirit, and our affirmation of God and of being is, in some ineffable manner, the affirmation of God by himself in his creature and by his creature. It is certain that God is present in his every creature, in each according to its own mode of being, and that he is in some sort the act and perfection of each one of them, that by which every being exists, that by which the living lives and the understanding understands. Therefore, it is God himself, present in the center of the intellect, according to the very nature of the intellect, hence as intelligible, who moves us, and is the middle term between being and thought.

We can go no further: this presence can neither be perceived nor understood. For God is present in us not as an object of sight but as the principle of sight. He is in us, but in the manner of the eye; the eye of the soul is that which sees, it cannot be seen by itself. Thus we ourselves are a mystery in our own eyes, for we are a divine participation. To understand the participation, we would also have to know the principle of which we participate. And, like our being, our intelligence and our will are unfathomable mysteries. Our intelligence is our light, and, like the sun, it illumines the world of sense; but for itself it is nothing but night and darkness.

Metaphysicians have always put the last touch to their philosophies by denying all forms of thought and of being. Everything sages utter and whatever our gross understanding admires was

not worth saying. *The word* is to absolute truth what the being which we are is to the infinite being. It is therefore a profound illusion to imagine that metaphysics sheds light upon the impenetrable mystery of being. This illusion constitutes the idolatry of human thought, it is the root of the monstrous and unholy error of pantheism. We enter real wisdom when we stop speaking. We begin to understand when we are willing not to understand. We cannot give God any name which fits him: he is the one we name by *our silence:* and the last word, the only word which has a meaning before we pass forever beyond the threshold of obscure knowledge, is this: the simple cry in which a created being concentrates all its activities and all its love: "My God!" This is not judgment, not knowledge; it is all that and more than that; it is the supreme gesture of a created being who closes his eyes, forgets himself and lets himself fall into the abyss.[7]

[7] *Ibid.,* pp. 826–827. See Fr. Isaye's commentary on all this in the same article.

Index

Abstraction
  transcending act of intellect, 86–87
Act
  God as Pure Act, 38–40, 45, 124–25, 139
  and potency, 24, 25, 27, 29, 38–40, 61, 82, 124, 138
Affirmation
  and co-affirmation, 88, 92, 94
  and contradiction, 37, 53, 58–9, 62
  movement of, 29, 87–88, 127, 165–70
  as start of knowledge, 60
  of unlimited good, 104
Agent intellect, 87–88
Agnosticism, 51, 61, 91
Analysts, 7, 17, 96–97, 165–7
Analogy
  analogous terms, 38, 126–27
  between God and creatures, 38, 123–24
  knowledge by, 84
A posteriori demonstration, 14, 24, 48, 60, 118
  definition of, 17
Appetite, 76, 103
A priori demonstration, 14
  definition of, 17
Aristotle, 90
A simultaneo demonstration, 14, 18–23, 60
  definition of, 18
Atheism, 111–12
Attributes of being, 15

Bañes, 146
Beauty
  transcendental, 105–06
Becoming, 142–43
  intelligibility of, 15–17
Being
  as subject and as object, 137–38
  order of, 15–16
Divine, etc., see God
  ideal order of, 16

Being (cont.)
intentional order of, 47
perfections of, 44–45, 125–31
Boethius, 134

Categories, 52–53
Catholic Church
on God's existence, vii
Causality
empirical, 52
metaphysical, 33, 36, 37, 53, 114, 117
phenomenal, 33, 37, 41, 117
principle of, xiii, 8, 9, 21, 24, 28, 36, 38, 40, 41, 48–92, 93, 118
Cause, 39, 49, 53, 94
division of, 24
in esse, 34, 36, 41, 43, 45, 47, 79
infinite series of, 29, 31, 37
subordinated causes, 29, 31, 37, 38–41
see: efficient, final, formal, material, exemplary
Certitude, vii, viii, 16, 57
Chance, 112
Change
see motion
Chardin, P. Teilhard de, 46, 109
Circuminsession of truth, 4, 7, 75
Concepts, 52, 62, 96
order of their being, 16
Consciousness, 44–45
Conservation, 31, 142
Contingency, 24, 66, 95–99
Contingent beings, 24, 34, 43, 49
Cosmology, 4
Cosmological argument, 34
Creation, 3, 111, 113–14, 141–45
Credulity, ix

Defever, 91, 114, 119, 129
DeFinance, 112
Definition
nominal, 14
real, 14
Denial
contradiction of, 37, 53, 58–59, 62, 97
Determination
see perfection
Determinism, 47, 138, 151
Dynamism of the intellect, 61–83, 90, 104, 114, 125
as transcending anticipation, 86–89
unlimited being as end of, 58–59, 63–92

Edwards, Paul, 34–36
Effect, 40–42, 53–54
Efficient causality, 24, 40–42, 55
God as Efficient Cause, 24
Empiricists, 91
End, 45, 47, 58, 59, 143
of intellect, 58, 135
of will, 102
Essence, 15, 56, 123, 129, 131
order of their being, 16
Divine, 43–44, 56, 115, 123–140
Eternity, 133–34, 154
Exemplary cause, 24
God as, 25
Evil, 3, 111, 114, 130, 136, 146, 149–61

Evil (cont.)
moral, 150–51, 155–56, 160
physical, 150, 152–60
Existence, 15, 42–44, 123, 131
Experience
as a start of proof, 16–17
intellectual, 17
sense, 17

Faculty, 76–78
Faith, ix
supernatural, 3
Fieri (becoming), 142
Final Cause, 24, 45–47, 66
Finality, 46–47, 58–59
Findlay, J. N., 1, 96–97
Finite Being, 54, 80–83
Finiteness, 66, 105
Freedom
God's, 138, 145
man's, 90, 145, 151–52
see also: liberty
Free acts, 90, 138, 145–48
Foreknowledge,
God's, 137, 145
Formal cause, 24

God
cooperation between, and creatures, 38
first cause, 96, 130
infinite being, 14, 43–44
infinite perfection, 38–39
necessary being, 42, 96–98
nominal definition of, 13, 129
personal being, 14, 139–40
pure act, 38–40, 45, 56, 81, 93, 124–25
God (cont.)
supreme cause, 31, 94
supreme consciousness, 134–36
transcendent being, 14
uncaused cause, 41–42
unlimited being, 56–72, 92
unmoved mover, 26, 38–40, 94
Glory
extrinsic, 144
Goodness, 44–45, 106, 125, 129, 131, 138
God's, 149

Happiness
argument from, 102–06
Hume, David, 50–52, 117

Immutability, 133, 139
Impossibility
intrinsic, 23
Indefinite regression
see regression
Intelligence, 125
and intelligence, 46–47
God's, 135–37
and finality, 47
Intellect, 131
as a faculty, 9, 76
intuition of, 53, 61–62, 83–84, 128
knowledge as end and good of, 58–63, 76
see: dynamism of intellect
Intuition, 8, 16, 53, 61–64, 77, 84, 104, 167–68
of affirmation of existence, 83–84
of causality and God's existence, 57

Intuition (cont.)
of intellectual dynamism, 61–62, 83–84, 128
Isaye, Gaston, S.J., 73, 96, 108

Justice, 132

Kant, Immanuel, 46, 50–53, 61, 95–96, 101, 117
Knowledge, 45–47, 58, 81, 88–89, 126, 135
act of, 49, 60, 89, 114
free, 72
God's, 146, 148
of God, 125–31, 135, 144
intellectual, 89
metaphysical, 80–81, 91
scientific, 80–81, 116

Leibniz, 21, 60
Liberty, 44–45, 136, 145
see also freedom
Life, 28–29, 44
Limited being, 56
Logical Positivists, 17
Love, 44–45, 138, 144, 162

Marcel, Gabriel, 69 (ftnte), 163
Maréchal, xi, 88, 119
Maritain, Jacques, 27, 83
Material cause, 24
Mathematics, 5–6
Matter
cause of, 34–35
Metaphysical causality, 6
Metaphysics, 3–6, 50, 79–81, 116
general (see ontology)
and science, 106–19
Molina, S.J., Luis de, 147
Moral evil, 150–51
Moral obligation
argument from, 99–102
Motion, 25–31, 38–40, 55, 82, 93–95
first mover, 26
local motion, 27, 29
of affirmation, 29, 77
ontological, 82
Movement
see motion

Names
of God, 128–29
Natural theology
definition of, 3
division of, 3
object of, 4
as a science, 3–6
Necessary being, 42–44, 95–98
Necessity, 42–44
Nouy, P. Lecomte du, 46, 109
Nominalism, 48
Nominal definition, 14

Ockham, William, 117
Ontology, 3–6
see also metaphysics
Ontological argument, 18–23, 60, 73, 95–96
Order in universe, 45–47

pain, 150, 156–57
Pantheism, 134, 136, 142
Péguy, 152
Perfection
acquired, 27
infinite, 39

Perfection (cont.)
transcendental, of being, 38–39, 44, 79, 113, 125
of God, 128, 132, 144
mixed, 130
pure, 131
Phenomenists, 36, 91
Person, 139–40
of God, 139–40
Positivism, 35–36, 47, 51, 111, 117
Positivists, 7, 36, 85–86, 111, 112, 117
Possibility, 42–44, 60, 103
order of being, 7
intrinsic and extrinsic, 23
Potency and Act, 24, 26, 29, 60, 82, 138
potency, 56, 93, 131
Principle of metaphysical causality
denial is a contradiction, 37, 53, 56
as analytic statement, 53–54
a condition for the possibility of mental content, 53, 56
formulation of, 56
vindication of, 57–92
Providence, 3, 145–48
Psychology, 4
Philosophical, 28

Rahner, Karl, 86–87, 119
Regression
infinite series, 63, 105
see: Cause, Subordinated Cause
Revelation, ix, 3, 140, 149
Romans, vii
Russell, Bertrand, 116

St. Anselm, 18–20
St. Augustine, x, 157
St. Paul, vii
St. Thomas, xi, 9, 28, 32, 45, 48, 90, 91, 119, 128, 129
five ways, viii, 24–25, 48, 118
first way, 24, 25, 40, 93–95
second way, 24, 40–42
third way, 24, 42–44
fourth way, 24, 44–45
fifth way, 25, 45–47, 110
Scheler, Max, 89
Scheuer, Pierre, 4, 5, 165–66
Science, 3, 60, 79, 80, 81, 85, 94, 143
argument from, 106–10, 110–19
natural theology as a, 3
Sin, 151
Subordinated Causes, 30–31, 37–41
indefinite series of, 31–34
Substance, 143
Divine, 128, 131
Suffering, 149–50
Sufficient reason
principle of, 55

Theology, 3
Trust in God, 163
Truth, 44–45, 82, 106, 131, 138

Unity
God's, 131–35
Unlimited being
as end of intellect, 56, 58–59, 67–71

Vatican Council, vii, viii, xi

Verifiability
principle of, 17

Whittaker, E., 46, 109

Will, 151
as a faculty, 9, 76
divine, 137–39
Wittgenstein, 84–86

DATE DUE

JUL 30 '68

AUG 30 '68

DEC 14 '84

JUN 15 1971

NOV 30 1988

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01007 0490